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DUNGEON™

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Back Behind the Screen

EDITORIAL

This 10x20 room has two exits, at the north and south ends. A long wooden table extends down the middle of the room, with a half-dozen humanoids seated around it, planning out some sort of mission with detailed maps and small figurines representing the participants and their potential adversaries.

The above describes an encounter set to take place shortly here in the halls of Wizards of the Coast, specifically Fridays 12 - 2 in the Lost Temple meeting room. I'm about to sit behind the DM screen after an edition-long absence and try my hand running the Scales of War Adventure Path.

First, let me disclose—and this should come as little surprise—that I am a satisfied convert to 4th Edition. I find this edition to be the most playable I've experienced, and I began my love affair with D&D back in 1982. Of course, back then I was in the second grade, and playing D&D meant my friends and I sitting around emulating what we could remember of the older kids' actual D&D games, using dice borrowed from the family Monopoly set. It wasn't until the great and glorious Christmas of 1983 when my parents bought me a D&D Basic set that I could actually claim to be playing a legitimate version of the game.

In the years since, I've been the most intrigued by the job of DM. In my mind, being a player meant having access to whatever magic items, spells, and monsters the DM introduced. On the other hand, being a DM essentially meant having access to all of the magic items, spells, and monsters—who wouldn't want all that fun?

That said, here's my confession. Throughout 3rd Edition (including 3.5), I played the game solely in the player's seat. Throughout numerous campaigns, I was content to limit my D&D experience to just my character.

Why? I can boil my thinking down to the following.

First Edition, in many ways, placed the power of the game in the hands of the DM. "Can I do this...?" and "What happens if I..." were essentially questions posited by the players to be answered by the DM. Not quite sure how a rule worked? Wondering what actions your character can perform? In the 1st (and largely 2nd) Edition campaigns I played, these were all questions that often needed answers from the DM. That was the relationship. You tell the DM what you want to do, the DM tells you if you can, you roll some dice, and the DM provides the result.

This is not the worst relationship in the world—and it was one I found myself comfortable with. That said, it's a relationship that depends very much on your DM. Someone who ran a fair game could expect a long-lived campaign. A DM who abused his position could expect a campaign whose only players would eventually become the younger brothers he forced to sit at the table (a memory of the worst DM I ever experienced as a player).

Third Edition shifted this relationship, in my opinion, into the players' hands. The DM still ran the game and mediated the story. But as far as the rules went, the players had much greater power in how they built their characters and what they could pull off. Pun-Pun is an example taken to the extreme, but min-maxing characters was rampant, often limited only by the players themselves. In several campaigns, I witnessed the tension this caused between experienced players looking to build the most powerful character they could, and newer players using the character they were most comfortable with—usually, a simpler, less tricked-out character.

Don't get me wrong. I don't have a problem with min-maxed PCs. The players were simply using the tools they were given—exactly what we'd been encouraging them to do. But in a campaign of mixed-experience players, what's a DM to do? Insist that "stronger" characters handicap themselves Harrison Bergeron-style? Find a group of players that were all of the same playing experience? This last option is terrible; we want friends around the table, and we want D&D to be enjoyable for all of them.

These relationships (between the players and DM, and between players themselves) largely kept me away from the DM screen throughout 3rd Edition. To me, 4th Edition strikes a tremendous balance between the players and the DM. In my Adventure Path campaign, some players will have already experienced 4th Edition, some with previous editions, and some are relatively new to the game—and that difference in experience doesn't worry me in the least.

In fact, I'm already looking forward to having the ogre bombardier lob that first cask of burning pitch....

HEROIC
1–10

"We are mercenaries, all of us, but only a precious few have honesty enough to admit it. Whether we sell ourselves for coin, for honor, or ideals, we all have a price whose continued payment leads us inevitably to our end. But when that end comes, will you admit to your balance sheet? Or will you lie when you claim that the blood on your hands was spilled for just cause, not simply your hunger for glory?"

The Shadow Rift of Umbraforge

SCALES OF WAR

by Scott Fitzgerald Gray

illustrations by Dave Allsop, Ryan Barger, Nicole Cardiff, Saejin Oh, and Chris Stevens

cartography by Mike Schley

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What's an Adventure Path?

Scales of War is the fourth Adventure Path to appear in the pages of *Dungeon Magazine*. But what, you ask, is an Adventure Path? Quite simply, it is a series of related adventures intended to form a complete D&D campaign that takes your players from 1st level all the way to, in the case of Scales of War, 30th level.

Previous Adventure Paths, presented with the third edition D&D rules, took characters from 1st to 20th level. But with all three tiers in the new edition ripe and ready to explore, we're pushing the limit with Scales of War. Each tier takes roughly six adventures to traverse, which means we'll finish off this Adventure Path in about eighteen issues. Each adventure advances characters from between one and a half to two levels of experience. We recognize that not everyone will meet every encounter or complete every quest, however, so periodically, we'll point you DMs to a supplemental Side Trek or short adventure to keep your PCs on pace. Plus, roughly every other month, *Dragon* will feature new support content for Scales of War.

Finally, this Adventure Path is intended to function as a complete D&D campaign. That means we'll be making some assumptions about the history of the world as we move along, just as you would in any campaign you run. We'll be borrowing heavily from the D&D mythology of 4th Edition, as well as all the great ideas that have cropped up in other products over the years—including the pages of past issues of *Dungeon*!

Enjoy your stay in Scales of War, and keep an eye out for next month's installment.

"The Shadow Rift of Umbraforge" is an adventure for five 4th-level characters who are approximately halfway to 5th level. Characters should be 6th level by the adventure's end. This adventure is a sequel to "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" and the third part of the Scales of War Adventure Path. However, with a little modification, it can be played as a standalone adventure or integrated into an existing campaign.

Background

In "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," the PCs discovered that dark creepers had sold arms and tactical intelligence to the orc war chief Tusk, aiding him in his attack against the folk of the Stonehome Mountains. In this adventure, the PCs investigate the link between the orcs and the dark ones, stumbling into an arms-running operation bridging two planes, and finally confronting the charismatic figure behind it.

Sarshan is an opportunistic shadar-kai arms dealer. For years, he has built an invisible mercantile empire around the sale and brokering of weapons, armor, mercenaries, and intelligence from his domain in the Shadowfell. Though Sarshan plays a significant part in this adventure, the PCs' initial focus is on one of his lieutenants—a dark creeper shadowborn stalker named Modra.

Before the "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," Modra was approached by Tusk's advisor Myrissa, a shadar-kai witch who knew of Sarshan's operations. However, the success of Sarshan's arms running and mercenary services turns on his ability to maintain a low profile in his dealings with clients in the world. Sometimes this means turning down jobs that run too much risk of exposure. Tusk's massive raid, aimed at the heart of the civilized frontier and a stone's throw from Sarshan's operations in the city of Overlook, was one of these.

When Sarshan rebuffed Myrissa's request, Modra approached the witch in secret. He struck a deal to supply Tusk with weapons and intelligence, sending in a group of his followers (the dark creepers in "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," including Iranda) to do the job. In going behind Sarshan's back, Modra expected that an overwhelming orc victory (won with the help of dark one subterfuge) would win his master's respect. However, with Tusk's forces routed and Modra's servants scattered or killed, the dark creeper has had to go to ground to escape Sarshan's wrath. The brass key that Iranda carried in "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" sets Modra on the PCs' trail—and leads them into the next stage of the adventure path.

Adventure Synopsis

Back in Overlook after the events of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," the PCs find themselves targeted by a group of street toughs seeking the mysterious brass key they obtained at the end of that previous adventure. Through their would-be assailants, the PCs obtain the name of the one who ordered the assault—"Modra."

By way of a skill challenge that takes them into the darkest corners of the city, the PCs learn that Modra is a dark creeper with connections to an arms-running operation and a poorhouse known as the Happy Beggar. In a network of secret caverns beneath the Beggar, the PCs discover that the weapons-running operation extends from the Shadowfell to Overlook by way of a pair of ancient magic portals. When the dark creeper flees to the Shadowfell, the PCs give chase.

Transported to the Shadowfell, the PCs find themselves in Umbraforge—an isolated military enclave that grows ever larger in its preparations for war. Foundries, forges, mercenary camps, and slave pens stand between a dark tower and a volcanic rift venting a river of lava and shadow. As they infiltrate by stealth and sword, the PCs discover that Modra is an underling to the shadar-kai Sarshan, master of Umbraforge. In addition to arms running, Sarshan sells mercenaries and creatures bred for war—horrid mutants created in an arcane foundry fueled by the raw power of the magma shadow rift.

Within the foundry, the PCs eliminate Modra and his followers, then use a secret tunnel to gain access to the tower. As they infiltrate Sarshan's inner sanctum, they face off against his house guards and allies before being brought before the shadar-kai and given a chance to join him. Then a massive tremor generated by the magma shadow rift shakes the tower, allowing the PCs to flee back to the Shadowfell gate. As Sarshan's foundry is leveled by the destructive forces of shadow and fire, the PCs escape back to the world, followed by a trio of savage specters bent on destruction.

When that battle is done, Sarshan's Shadowfell gate is destroyed and Overlook is safe. However, the PCs have uncovered information indicating that the apparently isolated conflicts that led them first to Rivenroar, then to Bordrin's Watch, touch on secret plots that threaten the end the world.

Setting

The first part of this adventure makes use of the city of Overlook section in "Siege of Bordrin's Watch."

Key to the Shadowfell Gate

In "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," the heroes fight a dark one emissary in the boiler room in the Vents. This emissary's name was Iranda, and he reported directly to Modra, the dark creeper villain of this adventure, something the characters will learn over the course of this adventure. Iranda kept a key to the Shadowfell gate below Overlook. If you've already run "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," feel free to give the PCs the key before this adventure begins. Alternatively, it's possible Iranda stashed it somewhere in Overlook, and the PCs need to track it down at some point during "The Shadow Rift of Umbraforge." This latter tactic is especially handy if the characters are not quite halfway to 5th level when this adventure begins. Finally, consider including the key among the possessions of the shadar-kai witch at the transfer portal (see page 19).

However, though the adventure starts and finishes in Overlook, the bulk of it takes place in the Shadowfell. Since this is likely the PCs' first excursion to this dark plane, familiarize yourself with "The Planes," page 160 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

The gateway to the Shadowfell that Sarshan uses to smuggle his armaments into the world (and which Modra co-opted for his own dealings with Tusk) lies within Overlook—a series of ancient caverns hidden beneath the cellars of an out-of-the-way poorhouse. The city's status as a major trading center provides Sarshan with the perfect cover for his clandestine trafficking in arms, armor, and mercenaries across the frontier. With the bustle of its streets, the endless dance of commerce in the Forge and Tradetown districts, and the steady stream of wains and carts passing through its gates, Overlook gives the shadar-kai an invisibility on which he has built a prosperous career.

Preparing for Adventure

"The Shadow Rift of Umbraforge" is divided into three parts. The first part, consisting of five encoun-

The Quests

As the PCs find themselves targeted by Modra, they slowly uncover the identity and plans of the dark creeper. However, as they pursue him into the Shadowfell, they come to realize that Modra's plots are only portents of a much greater danger.

Minor Quest—Modra's Threat
In parts one and two of the adventure, the PCs must determine Modra's connection to the orc raid and eliminate his continued threat. However, by the time they face off against the dark creeper in the Shadowfell, they realize that he is only a small part of a larger operation.
Reward: 200 XP.

Major Quest—The Opportunist
In parts two and three of the adventure, the PCs discover that Modra's threat is insignificant compared to that of his former master, the shadar-kai arms dealer Sarshan. The PCs must infiltrate Sarshan's domain in the Shadowfell, discover the extent of the shadar-kai's weapons-running operations, and learn that war is coming to the world.
Reward: 250 XP per character.

ters, details the PCs' pursuit of Modra and their discovery of Sarshan's Shadowfell gate. This part should bring the party to 5th level (assuming they were about halfway through 4th level at the completion of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch"). The remainder of the adventure (featuring the party's search for Modra in the Shadowfell, the incursion into Sarshan's tower, and the climactic confrontation with the savage specters that pursue the PCs from the Shadowfell back to the world) should bring them to 6th level.

Assuming you are already familiar with the layout of Overlook from "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," you need only to read this introductory material and The Beggar's Gate (including the Street Skirmish tactical encounter and the "Modra's Plots" skill challenge) to get ready for your first game session.

Modra's role in the attack on Bordrin's Watch should be enough to inspire a mostly good or lawful good party to want to capture or kill him. However, if the PCs are strongly unaligned, you might need to make things personal. During the "Modra's Plots" skill challenge (page 11), have Modra continue his vendetta against the PCs by attacking (or even killing) one or more NPCs close to them. Any characters the party became involved with during the "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" can fit the bill.

What You Need to Play

This adventure includes the encounters the PCs face as they explore and adventure in the area. It also provides tactical maps and more for the adventure. Also as mentioned above, read through at least the first few encounters described in this adventure before starting. This review enables you to become familiar with the material and the style of presentation.

Using Tactical Encounters

Each encounter includes several common elements, as described below.

Encounter Level

Each tactical encounter assumes a group of five player characters. An encounter of average difficulty is one where the encounter level is equal to the level of the party. Encounters that are 1 or 2 levels lower than the party are easy, while encounters that are 2 or more levels higher than the party are difficult encounters.

For overcoming an encounter, a group earns the XP value listed beside the encounter level. This amount should be divided by the number of group members, and an equal amount should be awarded to each character.

Setup

This section of a tactical encounter provides you with the basic parameters of the encounter. First, it provides context or background information for the encounter. Next, it provides a key to the monsters in the encounter so you can locate them on the tactical map. The map of each encounter area indicates where the monsters are located when the encounter begins. The setup section also describes what monsters are doing and how they react when the PCs arrive.

Read-Aloud Text

Read aloud text provides information about what the characters can see and are aware of. You do not have to read it word for word; feel free to paraphrase and use your own words when describing this information. Use read aloud text wisely; they are written for the most common approach to a particular situation and what your player characters do might require you to alter the information in any number of ways.

Monster Statistics

Encounters include stat blocks for each monster type present in the encounter. If more than one monster of a particular kind is present, the stat block indicates how many creatures can be found.

Tactics

This entry describes special actions the monsters take to defeat the adventurers. Sometimes this means the monsters take advantage of special features of the area or make use of special powers or equipment.

Map

Each encounter includes a map keyed with the initial locations of each monster. The map also indicates the location of any special features of the area.

Features of the Area

This section describes special features noted on the map. If the location has items or areas of interest with which the characters can interact, those features are described here. Look here to see if a door is out of the ordinary, if an altar has a secret compartment, or if the area includes treasure.

Treasure

This adventure makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards described in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters should accumulate fifteen parcels by the end of the adventure. Use the players' wish lists to determine which magic items you place as treasure.

These parcels can be given out at any point in the adventure you decide is appropriate, or you might reserve some treasure as a reward given to the PCs by the people of Overlook when the adventure is done. Whenever possible, tie treasure to the most climactic points of the adventure (the battle in the secret caverns, the foundry showdown with Modra, and so on).

Part 1: The Beggar's Gate

In the aftermath of the sealing of the mountain tunnels and the flooding of the Nexus in "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," Modra learned of the PCs' role in thwarting Tusk's plans. He has quietly kept tabs on them since their return to Overlook. The key found at the end of the previous adventure (see The Key to the Shadowfell Gate sidebar on page 6) is a hollow brass tube 6 inches long, set with a round ring at one end and four flanges of differing lengths at the other. The PCs can find no information in Overlook on the nature or origin of the key. However, any inquiries along those lines come back to Modra through his contacts in the thieves' guild known as the Lost Ones. (If the PCs are more circumspect, assume that the key has a magical property that allows Modra to eventually determine who carries it.) With the last of his coin, the dark creeper hires a squad of guild enforcers to dispense with the PCs and retrieve the key—Modra's only way to return to the Shadowfell and attempt to turn the tables on the vindictive Sarshan.

Between the end of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" and this adventure, the PCs have plenty of time to rest up, replenish missing supplies, and take care of any miscellaneous business. The first encounter (Street Skirmish, on the following page) should take place within a few days of the party's return to Overlook.

On assignment from Modra, a squad of enforcers from the Lost Ones have been quietly following the PCs while they carry out their routine business in the city. Their orders are to retrieve the key as quietly as possible, then kill the PCs. The Lost Ones wait now for the opportunity to strike.

Other Locations

The PCs might not automatically be inclined to return to Overlook to rest and recuperate when the "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" is done. (This is most likely to be the case if the party was in the middle of unfinished business in Brindol before being summoned to help defend against the orc raid.) If so, don't force the issue. Simply have the Lost Ones track the PCs to their alternate location and move encounter G1 accordingly. When the Lost Ones are searched or questioned, the PCs find that they received their orders from someone named Modra in Overlook. This should inspire the party to return to the mountain city.

TREASURE PARCELS

Parcel A: _____
Parcel B: _____
Parcel C: _____
Parcel D: _____
Parcel E: _____
Parcel F: _____
Parcel G: _____
Parcel H: _____
Parcel I: _____
Parcel J: _____
Parcel K: _____
Parcel L: _____
Parcel M: _____
Parcel N: _____
Parcel O: _____

TREASURE PARCELS (MONETARY TREASURE 2,840 GP)

Parcel 1:	**Magic item, level 9**
Parcel 2:	Magic item, level 8
Parcel 3:	**Magic item, level 8**
Parcel 4:	Magic item, level 7
Parcel 5:	**Magic item, level 6**
Parcel 6:	Magic item, level 6
Parcel 7:	**550 gp, or two 250-gp art objects + 50 gp, or one 500-gp gem + 50 gp**
Parcel 8:	500 gp, or one 250-gp art object + 250 gp, or five 100-gp gems
Parcel 9:	**340 gp, or three 100-gp gems + 40 gp, or one 250-gp art object + one potion of healing + 40 gp**
Parcel 10:	340 gp, or one 250-gp art object + 90 gp, or 300 gp + 400 sp
Parcel 11:	**300 gp, or three 100-gp gems, or one potion of healing + one 250-gp art object**
Parcel 12:	280 gp, or two 100-gp gems + 80 gp, or one 100-gp gem + 2 potions of healing + 80 gp
Parcel 13:	**260 gp, or one 250-gp art object + 10 gp, or two potions of healing + 100-gp gem + 60 gp**
Parcel 14:	160 gp, or one 100-gp gem + 60 gp, or one potion of healing + 110 gp
Parcel 15:	**110 gp, or one 100-gp gem + 10 gp, or one potion of healing + 60 gp**

Street Skirmish

Encounter Level 5 (975 XP)

Setup

The Lost Ones follow the PCs in search of a likely ambush spot, using their knowledge of Overlook to slip ahead of the party as they approach an enclosed laneway between two of the city's warehouses.

2 human berserkers (B)
3 human guards (G)
1 human mage (M)

At the outset of the encounter, the human guards are hiding behind the wagon to the north. Unless the PCs notice them (DC 20 Perception), do not place them on the battle grid. The mage starts out with total cover up the narrow alley to the north. Do not place his miniature on the battle grid until he is spotted or unless he attacks.

As the PCs enter the area, read:

Sudden movement catches your eye—a horse tethered to a hitching post stomps as you approach. From behind you, a voice calls out, "Took a wrong turn, friends. Too bad it'll be your last." Two human warriors move up from where they must have been following you, battleaxes pulled from beneath their cloaks as they attack.

If the PCs spot the guards to the north, read:

Behind a wagon to the north, you see movement in the shadows. Three figures crouch in hiding, waiting to spring.

Let the players place their miniatures anywhere in the center of the map.

We Meet Again

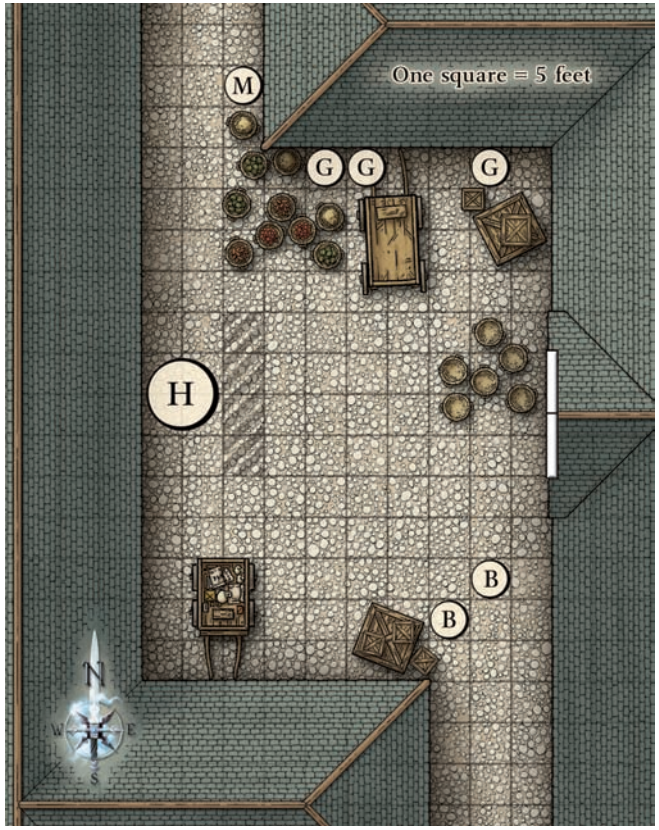
If the PCs had a previous altercation with the Lost Ones (page 22 of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch"), play up any lingering hostility in this encounter. Although the berserkers and guards here are a more elite squad than the street bravos the PCs faced in Overlook, the mage might well be the same character (assuming he survived). Even if they are new foes, these Lost Ones are aware of the PCs' run-in with their order, and they seek their own revenge even as they fulfill Modra's commission.

Tactics

The berserkers wade into combat in the first round, hoping to draw the PCs' attention while their mage leader attacks from hiding. They target the strongest-looking melee combatants with battleaxe attacks, saving their handaxes for thrown attacks against PCs trying to stay out of melee. The berserkers fight to the death.

The human guards engage those PCs who avoid or retreat from the berserkers' attacks. They use their halberds against any foes within reach, leaving PCs knocked prone by their *powerful strike* for the berserkers as they seek new targets. The guards flee if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer.

In the first round, the mage moves up behind the baskets (granting him cover) and makes a Stealth check to stay hidden (+4). He strikes first with *dancing lightning*, targeting spellcasters if possible. In subsequent rounds, he snipes with *magic missile*, reserving his *thunder burst* until he can target two or more PCs. The mage flees if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, or if all the other Lost Ones are killed.



Development

If any of the Lost Ones survive to be interrogated, they reveal that they were hired to retrieve a brass key the PCs carry. Any other wealth on the PCs was theirs to take, hinting at the key's value to whoever seeks it. The PCs find a scrap of parchment on one of the Lost Ones (their only clue if all the assailants were slain). A hastily drawn rendering of the brass key accompanies a note indicating the importance of its return and a name—"Modra." However, these Lost Ones know nothing more of Modra than his name.

Human Mage (M)	Level 4 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175
Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +5	
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	
Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+4 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.	
Magic Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**	
Ranged 20; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 4 force damage.	
Dancing Lightning (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**	
The mage makes a separate attack against 3 different targets: ranged 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 lightning damage.	
Thunder Burst (standard; encounter) ✦ **Thunder**	
Area burst 1 within 10; +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Alignment Any **Languages** Common	
Skills Arcana +11	
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+5)	
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+3)	
Equipment robes, quarterstaff, wand	

2 Human Berserkers (B)	Level 4 Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175 each
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2	
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *battle fury*	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14	
Speed 7	
Greataxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+7 vs. AC; 1d12 + 4 damage (crit 1d12 + 16).	
Battle Fury (free, when first bloodied; encounter)	
The human berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit.	
Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 5/10; +5 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.	
Alignment Any **Languages** Common	
Skills Athletics +9, Endurance +9	
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+2)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)	
Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 2 handaxes	

3 Human Guards (G)	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150 each
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +6	
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	
Speed 5	
Halberd (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the human guard's next turn.	
Powerful Strike (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires halberd; reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 15/30; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
Alignment Any **Languages** Common	
Skills Streetwise +7	
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)	
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)	
Equipment chainmail, halberd, crossbow with 20 bolts	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim light at dusk or dawn. Bright light by day. At night, lanterns hang on both the carts (bright 10).

Wagons: These empty wains are waiting to be loaded. A wagon provides cover and is tall enough that a Small creature can move under it and gain superior cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to jump up onto a wagon. With a successful DC 17 Strength check (a move action), a character can move a wagon forward or backward 1 square.

Draft Horse: This draft horse (marked "H" on the tactical map) is tied to a hitching post and normally not easily spooked. However, once combat starts, any characters entering the indicated squares behind the horse are subject to attack (+6 vs. AC, 1d6 + 5 damage) since the creature lashes out with a kick. If hit by any attack, the horse breaks its rope and leaves the area at a run.

Doors: These warehouse doors are barred from within. They cannot be opened from the outside.

Crates: These squares provide cover. A stack of crates stands 5 feet high and can be climbed with a successful DC 10 Athletics check.

Baskets: These 4-foot-high woven baskets are for transporting grain. Full baskets provide cover and are difficult terrain. Empty baskets provide cover but do not hinder movement.

The Streets of Overlook

In the aftermath of the ambush by the Lost Ones, the PCs have a chance to discover who hunts them.

Modra's Plots **Level 4**
Skill Challenge XP 700

Overlook, a fortified city on the eastern slopes of the Stonehome Mountains, is a bustling center of commerce and trade. Among its many people, you're sure to find more information about those who hunt you. Now you just need to figure out how you want to go about unearthing this information.

As the characters immerse themselves in the bustle and business of Overlook, they must seek information among the city's traders, brokers, and black marketeers. Modra has covered his tracks since coming back to the city (since he knows that Sarshan is looking for him), but by determining his movements and activities prior to the events of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," the characters gain valuable insight into the dark creeper's mission.

This skill challenge should be treated as a city crawl, making use of the full Overlook write-up in the previous adventure. As the characters pursue their quarry, you can break up the skill challenge with some of the optional encounters in "Urban Encounters," which is on page 21 of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch." You can also read details on the city, its various districts, and some of its key inhabitants in that adventure.

Complexity 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Streetwise, Thievery.

Other Skills Acrobatics, Athletics, Insight, Stealth.

Victory The characters do not draw attention to themselves when they discover the connection between Modra and the Happy Beggar almshouse. See "An Unexpected Ally," below.

Failure The characters determine the connection between Modra and the Happy Beggar, but they draw attention to themselves in the process. Their inquiries get back to Sarshan, who takes steps to secure the caverns beneath the Happy Beggar. Add an additional dark creeper to the Transfer Portal tactical encounter, making it 7th level and worth 1,500 XP.

Bluff DC 12 (1 success, maximum 3 successes; see Acrobatics or Athletics and Insight). On a successful check, the characters learn one piece of information from the rumor table. On a failed check, the PC takes a -2 penalty to his or her next Bluff or Intimidate check. If the PC spends 50 gp or more for favors and bribes, he or she gains a +1 bonus to the check.

The characters seeks out the seamy underside of Overlook, posing as those connected to or desiring to do business with the Lost Ones.

Diplomacy DC 7 (1 success, maximum 2 successes; see Acrobatics or Athletics and Insight). The PCs learn a rumor from the rumor table.

By lending a sympathetic ear to an NPC victimized by the Lost Ones, the PC hears a rumor. If the PCs have not already met her, Reggen at the Mountain's Hearth Inn (page 17 of the "Siege of Bordrin's Watch") is one such character.

Rumors

1 "The threat of the orcs might be ended after the siege of Bordrin's Watch, but word from the frontier is there's more trouble on the march. Just like Tusk's clan, the rabble of the mountains are getting their hands on good-grade weapons and armor, and they're looking to use it."

2 "You get all races in Overlook, but the dark ones that pass through the city keep to themselves. More often than not, those you do see are in the company of Lost Ones bodyguards and enforcers."

3 "Someone by the name 'Modra' was said to be buying information a few months back, looking for those with experience mining the old caverns of the Stonehome."

4 "Modra is a dark creeper, and well known in the city's criminal underworld."

5 "It's said that the dark creeper Modra brokers weapons and armor through the Overlook black markets."

6 "Modra met up with a shadar-kai witch a month ago. Some said she was doing a deal for weapons, but she didn't look much like a warrior."

7 "The far traders coming into Overlook talk of more and more trouble on the roads. They say the Red Hand of Doom was behind what happened in Brindol a few months past, but there's more cults than that on the rise across the frontier."

8 "The dark creeper is just the front man for arms dealing in the city. No one knows who's behind the operation, but rumor says it's bigger than anyone in Overlook will ever know."

9 "Modra was in the city three weeks past, but he was keeping a low profile. He had a squad of dark creepers with him, must have figured they'd stand out."

10 "Last time anyone saw Modra was just before the raid on Bordrin's Watch. I heard he's been on the run since then. Some job that went bad."

Intimidate DC 17 (1 success, maximum 3 successes; see Acrobatics or Athletics and Insight). On a failed check, the PC cannot make any further Intimidate or Bluff checks in this challenge.

The characters take a direct approach, shaking down an NPC connected to the Lost Ones to hear a rumor from the rumor table.

Streetwise DC 12 (1 success, maximum 4 successes; see Stealth). On a successful check, the characters hear a rumor from the rumor table. If a character spends 50 gp or more for favors and entertainment, he or she gains a +1 bonus to the check.

The PC spends his or her time on the street or in the taverns with one ear to the ground.

Thievery DC 12 (1 success, maximum 2 successes; see Stealth) This check can be made only by a PC who has previously made a successful Bluff or Streetwise check. On a successful check, the PC hears a rumor from the rumor table.

The PC follows up on earlier information by picking pockets, intercepting private messages, or another bit of useful subterfuge.

Acrobatics or Athletics DC varies (0 successes). A successful DC 7 check provides the character with a +2 bonus to the next Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check. A successful DC 12 check grants the character information from the rumor table. Failure results in a –2 penalty to any subsequent Bluff checks.

By performing feats of juggling, tumbling, knife-throwing, arm-wrestling, or other physical entertainments in one of the city's markets or taverns, the PC is in a perfect position to observe and listen.

Insight DC 12 (0 successes). With a successful check, the character gains a +2 bonus to his or her next Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

The PC's ability to read people is brought to bear on the search for information.

Stealth DC 12 (0 successes). On a successful check, the character gains a +2 bonus to his or her next Streetwise or Thievery check. On a failed check, the character takes a –2 penalty to his or her next Streetwise or Thievery check.

The PC keeps an especially low profile.

Reniss, Half-Elf Ranger **Level 4 Striker**
Medium natural humanoid

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23
AC 18 (20 against opportunity attacks); **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 15
Speed 6

Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+5 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage

Eyebite (standard; encounter) ✦ **Arcane, Charm, Implement, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +4 vs. Will; 1d6 + 1 psychic damage, and Reniss is invisible to the target until the start of her next turn.

Hunter's Bear Trap (standard; daily) ✦ **Martial, Weapon**
Requires longbow; +6 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).
Requires longsword; +5 vs. AC; 2d8 + 2 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Nimble Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Martial, Weapon**
Requires longbow; +6 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage; Reniss can shift 1 square before or after she attacks.

Shadow Wasp Strike (standard; encounter) ✦ **Martial, Weapon**
Requires longbow; target quarry; +6 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage.
Requires longsword; target quarry; +5 vs. AC; 2d8 + 2 damage.

Hunter's Quarry
Once per turn as a minor action, Reniss can designate the enemy nearest to her as her quarry. Once per round, Reniss deals 1d6 extra damage on an attack made against her quarry.

Unbalancing Parry (immediate reaction, when an enemy misses Reniss with a melee attack; encounter)
Reniss slides the enemy into a square adjacent to her and gains combat advantage against it until the end of her next turn.

Group Diplomacy
Reniss grants allies within 10 squares of her a +1 racial bonus to Diplomacy checks.

Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Elven, Dwarven
Skills Acrobatics +10, Diplomacy +5, Dungeoneering +5, Insight +2
Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, longsword, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows

This skill challenge lets the PCs immerse themselves in the bustle and business of Overlook, seeking information among the city's traders, brokers, and black marketeers. Modra has covered his tracks since coming back to the city (since he knows that Sarshan is looking for him), but by determining his movements and activities prior to the events of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch," the PCs gain valuable insight into the dark creeper's mission.

This skill challenge should be treated as a city crawl, making use of the full Overlook write-up in the previous adventure. As the PCs pursue their quarry, you can break up the skill challenge with some of the optional encounters in "Urban Encounters," which is on page 21 of "Siege of Bordrin's Watch." You can also read details on the city, its various districts, and some of its key inhabitants in that adventure.

Word on the Street

As the PCs progress through the skill challenge, they hear rumors from the table below. Some of these are specific to Modra, while others are tangential information regarding the slow spread of conflict across the frontier—conflict the party is already caught up in. Information can be given out in the order presented, or you can decide what to reveal based on the PCs' specific lines of inquiry.

Where a rumor has a time frame, adjust it as necessary depending on how much time has passed since "Siege of Bordrin's Watch" and "Rescue at Rivenroar."

An Unexpected Ally

In the course of their investigation, the PCs run into another character making similar lines of inquiry regarding the dark creeper Modra. This is Reniss, sister of the half-elf warlock Jen of the Farstriders ("Siege of Bordrin's Watch" page 26). When Jen was slain in the vents of the Stonehome, she used a *sending stone* to whisper her last words to her sister, a name the Farstriders tripped across before they were cut down—"*Modra. . . .*"

The female who approaches you wears brown leather beneath a green cloak, and a longbow is slung across her chest. Quietly, she says "I've heard word that there's a group in the city looking for someone named Modra. I'm doing the same, though I doubt it's for the same reasons. Perhaps we should compare notes."

Reniss is a valuable ally in the PCs' search. She explains her connection to the Farstriders. If the characters tell her they found her sister's body, she takes comfort in the fact that Jen's remains were spared the degradation of the orcs. In exchange for the PCs sharing what they've learned during the skill challenge, she passes on one piece of information they have not yet obtained.

"I met a dark creeper close to death in the Clean Sheets, looking like he'd been in the fight to end them all. He said he'd been working for this Modra when it happened. For a quart of bad beer, he told me that if I was looking for Modra, I'd better be fast. Someone else is hunting him—someone looking to kill him. The creeper didn't know where Modra was, but he'd heard him talk about some Tradetown almshouse called the Happy Beggar."

Reniss accompanies the PCs to the Happy Beggar.

The Happy Beggar

The Happy Beggar is an out-of-the-way poorhouse run by a husband-and-wife team of retired paladins. The Beggar is normally the last place to look for potential intrigue, if only because its reputation for piety among the locals means no self-respecting adventurers ever go near it.

Once in Tradetown, you have no trouble getting directions to the Happy Beggar, though you get your share of strange looks when you ask. "The kind of place you want to stay if you find group reading of Pelor's scriptures an entertaining evening," is one description you get. However, the sign above the door of a single-story hovel—a stooped and tattered mendicant with a broad grin—tells you you've arrived.

The Beggar sits sandwiched between a warehouse block and a section of rundown tenements. What no one outside of a small number of dark one and shadar-kai operatives knows is that the almshouse is owned by Sarshan, and it conceals the heart of his arms-running enterprise within the city.

The atmosphere inside the Beggar is as dingy as the whitewash on the outside walls. A plain common room sits two dozen miserable-looking patrons, most asleep in their chairs or sipping at cracked mugs. A few appear to be doubling as volunteer staff, carrying steaming teapots from table to table. Behind what would be a bar in any other establishment, a dour-looking human woman in white robes boils water at a wood stove. A similarly attired male greets you as he limps up a flight of stairs across the room. "Greetings and welcome. You are just in time for tea and songs of devotion. Please, join us!"

Prashant and his wife Ausma run the Happy Beggar on the proceeds of their former life as adventurers. Both are scrupulously lawful good, their honesty obvi-

ous to anyone making an Insight check. The paladins rent this space from one of Sarshan's front companies, but they know nothing of him, his operations, or the hidden areas of the cellar.

The manner of the infiltration and investigation of the Beggar is entirely up to the PCs. Because Prashant and Ausma have no reason to distrust them (and because the Beggar contains nothing worth stealing), the party can effectively have the run of the upper level. PCs are welcome to take advantage of the questionable accommodations in the common room, or to join in prayer and tea (the only libation served here).

Though the Happy Beggar sits atop Sarshan's Shadowfell gate, the almshouse is rarely used as a transit point. Instead, creatures and goods arriving from the Shadowfell are sent through a teleportation portal to one of a number of nearby warehouses. (See area 6, on page 15, and the Transfer Portal tactical encounter on page 19 for details.) The Beggar's paladin proprietors and its patrons thus speak the truth when they say they have no knowledge of the dark creeper (with one exception; see below).

At some point, the PCs must investigate the cellar. None of the patrons take notice of the party, and Prashant and Ausma make only passive Perception checks (13 for either) against any clandestine activities.

Friendly Advice

At some point before the PCs descend the stairs to the cellars, they attract the attention of a figure in the corner of the common room.

Alone in a rickety chair, a hunched form in a tattered cloak is watching you. When he catches your gaze, he smiles. The old man appears human or half-elf, but his face is deeply scarred by the ravages of disease. He coughs wetly into a grimy handkerchief and beckons you to sit.

Though the PCs have no way of knowing it, this is the shadar-kai arms dealer Sarshan. As a child, Sarshan was a victim of an arcane Shadowfell plague that left him orphaned and badly scarred. The shadar-kai became an outcast among his kind, forging his own path

The Happy Beggar

The Happy Beggar is a nondescript poorhouse serving the neediest transients of Tradetown. Though rundown and worn, Prashant and Ausma keep the place clean and comfortable.

Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: The walls of the upper level are lath and plaster under several dozen layers of whitewash. The ceilings are rough planks darkened by years of woodsmoke. The floors are close-fitting planks worn smooth and strewn with clean straw.

The cellar walls are rough-hewn stone, while the walls of the secret caverns are dressed stone except where indicated. The floors of the cellar and the dressed stone chambers are unmortared flagstones.

Illumination: The upper floor has lanterns burning by day and night. The cellar and the secret caverns have no light.

1. Main Floor. The main floor of the Happy Beggar consists of the common room and Prashant and Ausma's small bedchamber.

2. Kitchen. A large wood stove downstairs burns throughout the day, heating the common room above by way of narrow vents. This is the preparation place for Ausma's legendary (for all the wrong reasons) porridge. The Beggar serves it to the needy at no cost three times per day, and there are 1d4 volunteers in the kitchen or the larder from dawn to dusk. Ausma might be here as well.

Volunteering to help with the cooking is an easy way to gain access to the lower levels, but it takes a successful DC 18 Bluff check to win Ausma over.

3. Larder. The downstairs larder stores oats, barley, and enormous quantities of average-quality tea.

4. Collapsed Cellar. Beyond a locked door, a section of stone wall appears to have collapsed, completely blocking a passageway that once led farther beneath the Beggar. However, a successful DC 22 Perception check made to search the area reveals that the rubble pile has been arranged by hand long ago, creating a hidden access to the secret caverns beyond.

A second successful DC 22 Perception check uncovers signs that a creature (Modra) passed this way recently, and reveals the secret door.

The secret door is a carefully balanced stone slab. When pushed, it swivels open to reveal a narrow passage wide enough only for Medium or smaller creatures. The passage slopes sharply downward at the end, requiring a successful DC 20 Athletics check to safely descend. On a failed check, a character slides the last 10 feet to the cavern floor (taking 1d6 damage) and is knocked prone at the beginning of Black Cavern tactical encounter.

5. Black Cavern (Tactical Encounter). This rough cavern is a natural barrier between the Happy Beggar's cellar and the ancient Shadowfell shrine below it. When the transfer portal is shut down, this cavern is the only route between Sarshan's Shadowfell gate and the world.

The cavern is warded by deadly doomspore fungus and home to a group of shadowhunter bats. The bats ignore shadow creatures unless they are attacked. They attack all others on sight.

6. **Transfer Portal (Tactical Encounter).** Weapons, armor, and creatures moved through the Shadowfell gate in area 7 are transferred to one of Sarshan's warehouses through a magic archway in this chamber. The portal acts as a permanent teleportation circle, affecting any creature or object that passes through it from either side. If the archway is touched, its interior displays a view into a darkened warehouse stacked high with crates and boxes.

From his warehouses, Sarshan sends his goods by porter or wagon out through Overlook, where they blend in with the trade of the city before passing into the world beyond. Sarshan changes warehouses regularly for his operations, reconfiguring the portal and even shutting it down for extended periods in order to maintain a maximum amount of security.

A shadar-kai witch guards this area. Three dark creepers are also here, transferring a pair of caged shadow hounds to the warehouse for delivery.

The PCs can step through the portal to find themselves in a Tradetown warehouse a few blocks from the Happy Beggar. The other side of the portal is a permanent teleportation circle scribed on the warehouse wall. The warehouse can be used as an alternate entrance to the secret caverns, but it does not otherwise play a part in this adventure.

7. The White Shrine (Tactical Encounter). This ancient shrine is the location of Sarshan's portal to the Shadowfell. The shadar-kai discovered this gate by way of its other side in the Shadowfell, eventually working his way into the cellars above. Realizing that he had discovered an access point into Overlook, he spent a year activating the ancient teleportation portal in area 6 and setting up his operations in the city.

From its days as a shrine to ancient shadow gods, this area is guarded by wraiths that can be summoned by any shadow creature. It is occupied by Modra when the PCs arrive.

with blood and steel as the leader of an elite mercenary company called the Black Arrow.

One beneficial side-effect of Sarshan's scarring is that his gray shadar-kai complexion and black eyes naturally pale whenever he spends time away from the Shadowfell. This allows him to easily disguise himself as a human or half-elf in the world. He has come to the Beggar as a crippled veteran (a guise he adopts frequently in Overlook), seeking Modra with the intent of executing him slowly for his betrayal. If the PCs have been asking questions regarding the dark creeper (quietly or otherwise), Sarshan overhears them. Otherwise, the shadar-kai recognizes Reniss from a previous near-encounter and guesses why the PCs have come here.

The old man introduces himself as Brenat. He plays the part of a doddering fool seeking conversation, fixating at first on the PCs' arms and armor as he marks them as adventurers. If the PCs make any mention of seeking Modra, he becomes animated, sharing a taste of his personal philosophy in an attempt to gauge the worth of the PCs and discover what they know.

"I know the one you mean. A dark creeper, and none as dark as him, or so I've heard. Time was, he used the Happy Beggar as a meeting place, but I'd reckon he hasn't been seen here in two years or more. I ran him off one time myself. I might not look it, but I fought dark creepers in the mountains as a younger man, sellsword to a dozen lords. Much as yourselves, I'd wager. Adventurers all have a price, eh?"

In the end, Sarshan deduces that the PCs are hunting Modra for themselves and decides to let them try their hand at the job. His need to maintain secrecy is absolute, and with the damage Modra has already done to his operation, he is happy to let someone else eliminate the dark creeper.

Sarshan leaves as soon as the PCs have no further questions for him, though he gives them this final bit of advice as he gets up.

"Wherever you find this Modra, heed me. He's a black-hearted one—make no mistake and strike no bargains with him. Kill him quickly before he gets the chance to return the favor."

Sarshan assumes that the PCs will seek and find Modra in Overlook. Because he doesn't know that Modra has lost the brass key he stole, he has no worries about the PCs being in the Beggar.

Sarshan's mission in the city turns mostly on meeting existing clients and doing damage control in the aftermath of Modra's botched deal. This keeps him conveniently away from the Beggar and his fortress in the Shadowfell until the end of the adventure.

If the PCs talk to Prashant or Ausma afterward, a successful DC 17 Insight or Diplomacy check reveals that contrary to his story of knowing Modra, the stranger was asking about the dark creeper just a half hour before the party arrived.

Black Cavern

Encounter Level 4 (750 XP)

Setup

A group of shadowhunter bats roosts among the stalagmites in this cavern, while patches of deadly doomspore form a barrier against those would cross it. If the PCs enter with any light sources, or if a character fails an Athletics check and slides into the cavern, the bats attack at once with surprise. If the bats have surprise, do not place their miniatures until they attack.

4 shadowhunter bats (B)

When the PCs can see into the cavern, read:

This natural stone cavern is cut in half by a cliff, and the eastern side descends into darkness. Stalagmites and stalactites obscure your view, and barely visible to the far southeast is an archway of finished stone that opens up to the south.

When the shadowhunter bats attack, read:

A flurry of movement erupts from the shadows of the ceiling. Four enormous bats shriek as they drop toward you, their bladed tails slashing the air.

Tactics

The bats descend from the ceiling to make *flyby attacks*, swooping up again to stay out of melee range and maintain cover. If a character is knocked prone as he or she enters the cavern, the bats attack with combat advantage in the hope of a quick kill. Likewise, if the PCs attempt to flee through the chamber, the bats attack with combat advantage while they are climbing down the cliff.

If three bats are killed, the fourth flees shrieking for area 6, alerting the creatures there and joining them in the Transfer Portal tactical encounter.

Doomspore Gauntlet

The rough cliff that separates the eastern and western sides of the cavern is entirely covered with doomspore. Sarshan's operatives have carefully cultivated the deadly fungus to ward off those who might explore this area.

When the PCs can see over the cliff, read:

The cliff descends 20 feet to the floor of the cavern's eastern side. However, as you look down, you can see that the rough cliff wall is dotted by patches of toadstool-shaped fungus.

Doomspore	**Level 3 Obstacle**
Hazard	XP 150

Usually found in large, natural caverns, or in areas tainted by the Shadowfell, these patches of large, toadstool-shaped fungus can grow to be about 3 feet tall. When disturbed, a doomspore unleashes a cloud of deadly spores.

Hazard: A doomspore fills a square (the square is difficult terrain). When triggered, it releases a cloud of spores.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the fungus.

Additional Skill: Dungeoneering

✦ **DC 17:** The character identifies the fungus as doomspore.

Trigger

When a creature enters a square of doomspore, or kicks or pokes at it from an adjacent square, or attacks it in any way, the fungus releases a cloud of spores. A bloodied character in the initial burst or that begins its turn in a doomspore cloud is attacked by the poison.

Attack

Standard Action **Close** burst 1

Target: Bloodied creature in burst

Attack: +6 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d10 poison damage and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Effect: The cloud provides concealment for creatures inside it. The cloud persists until the end of the encounter or for 5 minutes. Once a patch of doomspore creates a cloud, it can't create another one for 24 hours.

Countermeasures

✦ A character can move into a square of doomspore without triggering the cloud by making a DC 21 Dungeoneering check. The character's move must end in the doomspore's square.

4 Shadowhunter Bats (B)	Level 3 Lurker
Medium shadow beast	XP 150 each
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 12	
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 8; see also *flyby attack*	
⊕ **Tail Slash** (standard; at-will)	
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage. In dim light or darkness, a shadowhunter bat gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 6 damage.	
⸸ **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The shadowhunter bat flies up to 8 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The bat doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Skills Stealth +10	
Str 13 (+2)	**Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 11(+1)

Features of the Area

Ceiling: The ceiling is roughly level, rising 20 feet above the western side of the chamber and 40 feet above the eastern side.

Tunnel Mouth: The tunnel from the cellar bottoms out here in a steep slope of crumbling stone. Characters must make a successful DC 20 Athletics check to safely descend. On a failed check, a character slides the last 10 feet to the cavern floor (taking 1d6 damage) and is knocked prone.

Stalactites and Stalagmites: These narrow columns of stone extend from the ceiling and floor of the cavern, providing cover. AC 5, Reflex 5, Fortitude 10; hp 40.

Rubble: These areas of loose scree are difficult terrain. A character who runs through rubble must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone. Characters can move at normal speed without difficulty.

Cliff: This steep slope drops 20 feet from the western side of the cavern to the east. Scaling the cliff requires a successful DC 20 Athletics check. A creature that drops down from above takes 2d10 falling damage. Also see Doomspore Gauntlet.

Transfer Portal

Encounter Level 6 (1,325 XP)

Setup

A shadar-kai witch (one of Sarshan's personal guard) keeps watch over this area. A large cage on a cart holds two shadow hounds that the dark creepers are in the process of transferring to the warehouse, where they'll be shipped out of the city to their new owners. The cage has a magical property that prevents the hounds from teleporting. The intelligent hounds are far from happy about their fate.

3 dark creepers (D)
2 shadow hounds (H)
1 shadar-kai witch (W)

When the PCs are at the head of the stairs, read:

A savage howl echoes up the stairs as you approach. A lantern is burning somewhere beyond, giving a glimpse of a finished stone chamber set with marble flagstones.

When the PCs can see the entire chamber, read:

This odd-shaped chamber extends outward in three sections, and it is about 60 feet wide at its end. Though its frescoed walls suggest a sort of temple, it resembles a storeroom now, with boxes and crates stacked in piles.

In the center of room stands an enormous open stone archway. Adjacent to it is a large steel cage on a low cart, somehow obscured in shadow. Within the cage, two fierce hounds appear to be wrapped in darkness as they snarl and claw at the door.

If the witch and the dark creepers have been alerted by the shadowhunter bat, they are hiding behind crates while the bat circles the room. Place the bat's miniature but do not place the others until they attack.

If the other occupants of the room have not been alerted, read:

A short figure all in black threatens the snarling hounds with a spear through the bars of the cage. Two more dark creepers push the cart toward the arch. Farther along, a tall, gray-skinned female is inspecting a stack of crates. None of them appear to notice you.

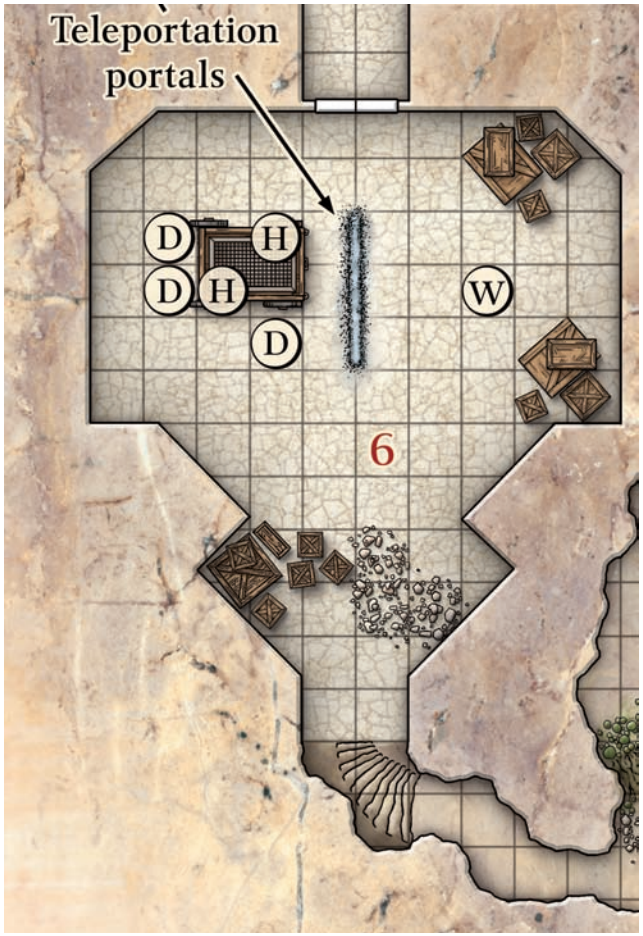
Tactics

If they have been alerted, the witch and the dark creepers attack with surprise when three or more PCs have descended the stairs. If not, they are distracted and have their backs to the stairs, giving the party a chance to gain surprise.

The dark creepers take the first round to open the shadow hounds' cage, then hide beneath the cart to avoid behind attacked. Once in melee, the creepers use *dark step* to shift throughout the area of combat and maintain combat advantage.

The enraged hounds race for the PCs, alternating the use of their *baying* power to maximize its effect. They use *shadow ambush* to teleport from target to target, attacking with combat advantage.

The witch uses her *shadow jaunt* to dart in and out of melee, targeting slower-moving foes with her *blackfire touch* and using *beshadowed mind* against PCs making ranged attacks. If forced into melee, she orders the dark creepers to her side and casts *deep shadow* as a defensive barrier.



If both the dark creepers are killed, the witch retreats to area 7, summoning the wraiths there and fighting with them in the White Shrine tactical encounter.

Development

The shadar-kai witch carries a brass key identical to the one held by the PCs. This activates the Shadowfell gate in area 7 (White Shrine tactical encounter).

2 Shadow Hounds (H) **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium shadow magical beast XP 250 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
Shroud of Night aura 5; bright light in the aura is reduced to dim light, and dim light becomes darkness.
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Vulnerable 5 radiant
Speed 7, teleport 7

Bite (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage; see also *shadow ambush*.

Baying (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 5; deafened creatures are immune; +8 vs. Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of the shadow hound's next turn.

Shadow Ambush
When the shadow hound teleports adjacent to an enemy, it gains combat advantage and deals an extra 1d6 damage on the next attack it makes against that enemy this turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Endurance +10, Stealth +10
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 6 (+1) **Cha** 16 (+6)

Features of the Area

Illumination: A lantern hangs on the north side of the teleportation portal archway (bright 10).

Frescoes: Faded images adorn the walls here, most appearing to show humans in the act of worshiping faint, shadowy creatures.

Cart and Cage: This well-built steel cage is 10 feet square and stands 5 feet high, with bars set every 6 inches (AC 8, Reflex 8, Fortitude 8; hp 30). It is imbued with a magical property that prevents creatures within it from teleporting.

The cage sits on a four-wheeled heavy wooden cart. The cart and cage provide cover and can be climbed with a successful DC 10 Athletics check. A Small creature can drop prone under the cart to gain superior cover.

Shadar-kai Witch (W) **Level 7 Controller**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 300

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 77; **Bloodied** 38
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19
Speed 6; see also *shadow jaunt*

Blackfire Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic**
+11 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 fire and necrotic damage.

Beshadowed Mind (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target has no line of sight to anything more than 2 squares from it (save ends).

Deep Shadow (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ✦ **Necrotic**
Aura 2; thick, writhing shadows surround the shadar-kai witch. The witch and any other shadow creatures in the aura gain concealment. In addition, enemies that enter or start their turns in the aura take 5 necrotic damage, and enemies (including flying ones) also treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain. The shadar-kai witch can sustain the aura as a minor action. However, the effect ends if she uses shadow jaunt or moves more than half her speed on her turn.

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The shadar-kai witch teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of her next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +8, Arcana +12, Religion +12, Stealth +13
Str 13 (+4) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 19 (+7) **Cha** 17 (+6)

With a successful DC 15 Strength check (a move action), a character can move the cart and cage forward or backward 2 squares.

Crates: These squares provide cover. A stack of crates stands 5 feet high and can be climbed with a successful DC 10 Athletics check.

Teleportation Portal: This black stone archway is a semicircle 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high. Silver crystals are set within the stone in a random pattern. Runes in Common cover it, but their ancient dialect requires a DC 17 History check to decipher.

3 Dark Creepers (D) **Level 4 Skirmisher**
Small shadow humanoid XP 175 each

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +4; darkvision
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27; see also *killing dark*
AC 18 (see also *dark step*); **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15
Speed 6

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.

Killing Dark (when reduced to 0 hit points)
Close burst 1; targets enemies; each target is blinded (save ends). When slain, a dark creeper explodes in a spout of darkness.

Combat Advantage
The dark creeper deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Dark Step (move; at-will)
The dark creeper moves up to 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks, and gains combat advantage against any target that it ends its move adjacent to.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +11, Thievery +11
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 13 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+3)
Equipment black garments, 5 daggers

They identify the arch as an ancient shadar-kai teleportation portal.

The portal acts as a permanent teleportation circle, affecting any creature or object that passes through it from either side. If the archway is touched, its interior displays a view into a darkened warehouse stacked high with crates and boxes.

The PCs can step through the portal to find themselves in a Tradetown warehouse a few blocks from the Happy Beggar. The other side of the portal is a permanent teleportation circle scribed on the warehouse wall. The warehouse can be used as an alternate entrance to the secret caverns, but it does not otherwise play a part in this adventure.

The White Shrine

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

This chamber holds the portal connecting the caverns to the Shadowfell.

Modra, dark creeper shadowborn stalker (M)
5 wraiths (W)
1 seething wraith (R)

When the PCs enter this area, read:

This enormous darkened chamber has walls and ceiling of white marble. The northwest corner of the room has collapsed, a fall of stone spreading out across the floor. To the south, a stone arch similar to that seen in the chamber to the east stands against the wall. Another archway stands in the center of the chamber. However, the interior of this arch is obscured by a wall of black mist that roils and twists as if blown by a fierce wind.

If the witch from the Transfer Portal encounter did not come here, Modra stands before the Shadowfell gate, attempting to activate it without the use of the brass key. (He knows that the witch carries a key, but he cannot take on her and the dark creepers together.) The witch and the creepers in area 6 are unaware of Modra's presence here, since he hid behind the rubble pile when the portal was activated as they passed through it.

When the PCs see Modra at the portal, read:

Another dark creeper stands before the arch, his hands pressed to it as he mutters an incantation. Suddenly aware of your presence, he spins toward you, then vanishes.

Modra, Shadowborn Stalker **Level 7 Elite Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid, dark creeper XP 600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
HP 124; **Bloodied** 62; see also *killing dark*
AC 23 (see also *dark step*), **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage.

Double Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires combat advantage; Modra makes 2 short sword attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +12 vs. AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.

Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter) ✦ **Zone**
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of Modra's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except Modra. Any creature entirely within the area (except Modra) is blinded.

Combat Advantage
Modra deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target he has combat advantage against.

Dark Step (move; at-will)
Modra moves up to 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks, and gains combat advantage against any target that he ends his move adjacent to.

Cloak of Shadows (minor; encounter) ✦ **Illusion**
Modra is invisible until the end of his next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +9, Stealth +12, Thievery +12
Str 11 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Equipment black cloak, chainmail, short sword, 5 daggers

If the witch fled here, the PCs see her taking cover behind the archway, while Modra hides behind the main rubble pile to the northwest.

Both the witch and Modra know that this chamber is protected by undead guardians. As soon as the PCs appear, one of them summons the wraiths.

When the wraiths are summoned, read:

The words of an incantation in Common ring out through the chamber: "Protect this place with shadow's claws!" Suddenly, the dark mist obscuring the archway is torn through by a flash of white light. Six spectral shapes emerge from the archway, racing toward you.

5 Wraiths (W) **Level 5 Lurker**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 200 each

Initiative +10 **Senses Perception** +2; darkvision
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18
Regeneration 5 (if the wraith takes radiant damage, regeneration is negated until the end of the wraith's next turn)
AC 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial;
Vulnerable 5 radiant (see also regeneration above)
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing ; see also *shadow glide*

⊕ **Shadow Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

Combat Advantage ✦ Necrotic
The wraith deals an extra 1d6 necrotic damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Shadow Glide (move; encounter)
The wraith shifts 6 squares.

Spawn Wraith
Any humanoid killed by a wraith rises as a free-willed wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +11
Str 4 (-1) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 15 (+4)

Seething Wraith (R)	Level 7 Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 300
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision	
Seething Whispers (**Psychic**) aura 3; deafened creatures are immune; any enemy in the aura at the start of its turn takes 5 psychic damage and is dazed until the start of its next turn. (If the mad wraith takes radiant damage, the aura is negated until the end of the seething wraith's next turn.)	
HP 76; **Bloodied** 38	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant (see also *seething whispers* above)	
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing	
⊕ **Touch of Hate** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
+9 vs. Will; 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will defense (save ends).	
⸸ **Touch of Chaos** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**	
+10 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target moves up to its speed and makes a basic attack against its nearest ally as a free action.	
Spawn Wraith	
Any humanoid killed by a seething wraith rises as a free-willed seething wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common	
Skills Stealth +13	
Str 6 (+1) **Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 6 (+1)	
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 19 (+7)	

Tactics

The wraiths work together to flank foes, using their *shadow touch* with combat advantage. The mad wraith throws itself at the PCs, hoping to catch as many as it can within the area of its *mad whispers*. It uses *touch of chaos* against the most powerful-looking melee combatants, and it uses *touch of madness* while waiting for that power to recharge.

The wraiths do not attack shadow creatures. They pursue foes out of this area if necessary, but they cannot pass through the gate if the PCs flee to the Shadowfell. They otherwise fight until destroyed.

After using his *cloak of shadows* to vanish, Modra stays as far away from the fight as possible, taking cover behind rubble and throwing daggers at PCs who attempt to close with him.

Dark Bargain

Modra is desperate to retrieve the brass key and return to the Shadowfell and his allies there. In the second round of combat, he shouts out to the closest PC that he is willing to strike a bargain. If the PCs give him the brass key, he promises to call off the wraiths (he can't) and leave the party in peace.

The PCs can make Sense Motive checks against Modra's Bluff check. If they decide to give him the key, the dark creeper laughs as he runs behind the archway, fits the key, then disappears into the roiling black mists.

Into the Shadowfell

One way or another, the PCs must go through the Shadowfell gate in pursuit of Modra. If they give him the brass key (either the original or the one they took off the witch), they can use the other key to follow. If they seem disinclined to do so (even to escape the wraiths), you might have to take matters into your own hands.

If necessary, have a tremor in the Shadowfell (see "Umbraforge," page 25) strike while the PCs are in the thick of combat here or investigating the archway in the aftermath of the fight. The tremor can't be felt in the world, but it creates a surge of energy within the gate. Tendrils of shadow lash out into the room, carrying the PCs (and Modra if necessary) into the Shadowfell.

Development

Modra is meant to escape this encounter. However, if the PCs have the upper hand, don't force the issue. Once they are in the Shadowfell, the party can hear rumors that lead them in the direction of one of Modra's allies, who takes over his goal of crippling Sarshan's operations. Simply change his name in the later encounters.

Features of the Area

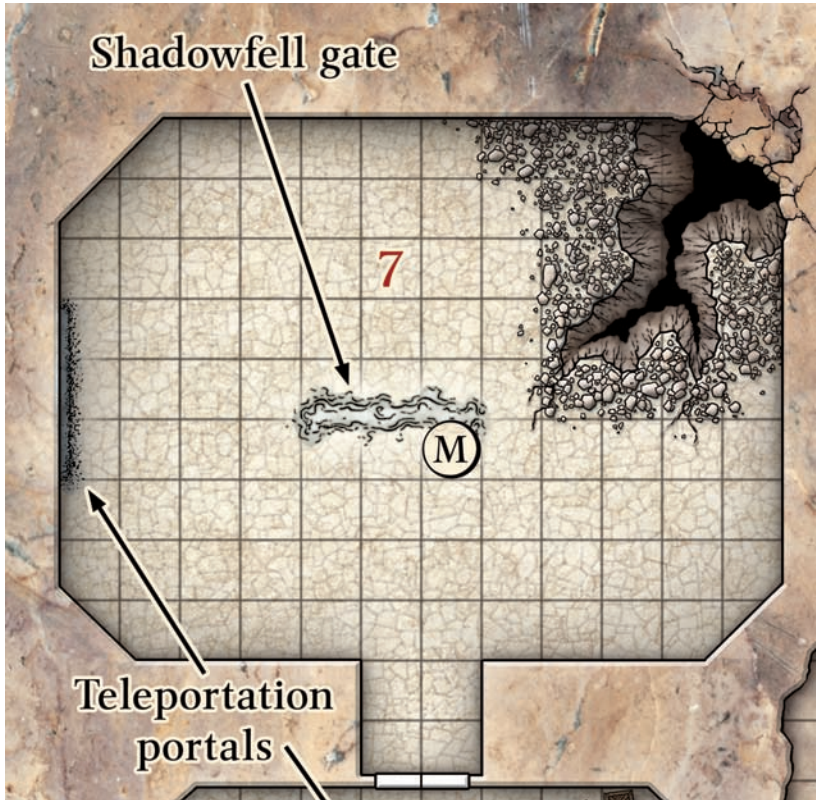
Rubble: Where the northwest corner of the chamber has collapsed, it spreads into areas of loose scree that are difficult terrain. A character who runs through rubble must make a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone. Characters can move at normal speed without difficulty.

Larger rubble piles provide cover. The main rubble pile in the northwest corner provides superior cover.

Teleportation Portal: This black stone archway is a semicircle 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high, set against the stone wall of the chamber. Silver crystals are set within the stone in a random pattern. Runes in Common cover it, but their ancient dialect requires a successful DC 17 History check to decipher. They identify the arch as an ancient shadar-kai teleportation portal. Though it resembles the portal in area 6, this archway is inert.

Shadowfell Gate: This white stone archway is a semicircle 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high. Black crystals are set within the stone in a random pattern. Runes in Common cover it, but their ancient dialect requires a successful DC 17 History check to decipher. They identify the arch as an ancient shadar-kai portal leading to the Shadowfell.

On the left side of both faces of the arch is a circular indentation set within the stone. This fits one of the brass keys carried by the PCs and the shadar-kai witch in the Transfer Portal encounter. By fitting the key into the archway (a minor action), the Shadowfell gate is activated for 1 round. The character fitting the key intuitively knows that the arch is attuned to him or her plus up to five additional creatures of his or her choice and any gear they are in contact with as they pass through the portal. Even when activated, the Shadowfell gate does not function for any other creatures.



PART 2: UMBRAFORGE

The dominion of Sarshan in the Shadowfell is a military enclave that grows larger every day in preparation for war. Two features dominate the site: Tower Umbraforge, the angular edifice that serves as the center of Sarshan's operations, and the magma shadow rift that flows from a low, rocky ridge overlooking the area. Close to the tower stands the arcane foundry where Sarshan magically augments living creatures for combat.

This second part of the adventure takes place in the camps, training grounds, and other areas around the tower. (Part three of the adventure takes place within the tower.) As they seek the escaped Modra once more, the PCs learn the nature of this place and discover the full extent of Sarshan's arms-running operations.

The areas around Umbraforge—including the magma shadow rift—will see further development when the PCs return here later on in the adventure path.)

Arrival

When the PCs step through the Shadowfell gate beneath the Happy Beggar, they find themselves in a mirror-image copy of the chamber they just left (see area 1, below).

You feel a wrenching sensation as bitter darkness swallows you. Then the light returns, dimmed somehow. As your eyes grow accustomed to the gloom, you find yourself in a chamber that appears to be a strange inversion of the one you just left. The walls, floor, and ceiling here are jet black, and the orientation of the room is reversed so that the door now lies to the west and the second stone arch is on the north wall. What was a rubble fall to the northeast is now a rift where the floor has collapsed in the southwest. Along the walls, globes of gray glass give off a dim light.

Though the chamber is deserted, overturned stools and a burning brazier show that it has been recently occupied. A successful DC 20 Perception check notes signs of a struggle. A pair of dark creeper guards here

UMBRAFORGE

Sarshan's domain is a chaotic collection of mercenary camps, training grounds, slave pens, and the marketplaces that serve this massive military enclave. Over it all, the shadowy pall of the magma shadow rift glows a dull red.

1. The Black Shrine (Encounter T5): The cavern the PCs arrive in after passing through the Shadowfell gate is a mirror-image inversion of the White Shrine (area 7 and encounter G4 in the first part of the adventure). The walls, floor, and ceilings here are black stone. The teleportation portal is white stone with silver crystals inlaid, while the Shadowfell arch is black stone inset with white crystals. The fall of rubble in the northwest corner of the White Shrine is a collapsed rift in the southeast corner of the black shrine.

Unlike in the mirror-image white shrine, the teleportation portal against the north wall here is functional. Touching it reveals a forest shrouded in shadow (area 10 of Umbraforge Tower), but any PC trying to enter the archway is pushed back by an unseen force. A successful DC 22 Arcana check indicates that the portal is attuned to a specific creature.

2. Magma Shadow Rift: A low black ridge dominates the landscape around which the camps of Umbraforge spread. A rift along the northeast face of the ridge vents what appears to be black-streaked lava to the air. From the road below, one can see that the lava is shot through with what appears to be liquid shadow, a magical effect that Sarshan draws on to power his foundry.

Creatures within 10 feet of the edge of the rift or the lava channel must make successful DC 20 Endurance checks against the extreme heat or lose one healing surge. Creatures that enter the lava take 4d12 fire damage per round.

3. Mercenary Camps: These tightly packed tent villages spread across the plain between the tower and the ridge. At least twice a day, a mercenary company packs up and heads out to the east or west to a location from which they can subsequently be deployed to the world. New mercenaries trickle in along the roads at the same rate. See the "Sarshan's Secrets" skill challenge (page 27) for more information.

4. Training Grounds (Encounter S1): These open fields of stinking mud and cast-off armor and weapons are in use day and night by the mercenary companies of the camps.

5. Slave Bazaar (Encounter S2): In addition to his mercenaries and arms dealing, Sarshan has recently begun to transport slaves into and across the Shadowfell. The slaves confined here represent a host of lesser races, from dark ones and shadowgoblins (see encounter S3), to goblins, kobolds, elves, humans, gnomes, and dwarves. A majority of these wretches are destined to become conscript troops or workers in the war effort that Sarshan's operations support. However, the shadar-kai also uses the bazaar as a source of creatures to be transformed in the dark foundry.

Aside from being the peripheral location for encounter S2, the slave bazaar plays no part in this adventure. If this rankles players or PCs who feel that the party has an obligation to try to correct this injustice, create some extreme defenses for the slave pens and let the PCs know that it's not time to take on the slavers yet. Then when the camp is overthrown in the aftermath of encounter T5, let the players know that the slave masters of the bazaar have been permanently overthrown.

6. Market Tents: With the mercenaries that pass through Umbraforge come the crafters and traders who support them. These areas are composed of virtual villages of tents and wagons. Their specific features are left up to you, but the PCs can find any goods or services here normally available in a large town.

7. Bridge: This arched stone bridge rises 40 feet above the smoking flow of the lava trench below. The heat is intense enough to be felt from the bridge, but it presents no danger. A force of dark creepers and shadowgoblins guard the bridge at all times. They keep only a nominal watch on traffic east, west, and south, but no one proceeds north to the tower without an escort by Sarshan's house guard.

8. Forges: This collection of buildings serves as the center of Sarshan's armaments operation. Crews of dark ones and shadowgoblins work here night and day, forging the weapons and armor on which Sarshan's wealth is built.

9. Dark Foundry (Encounter S3): The most recent addition to Sarshan's war machine, this foundry produces weapons of a different sort. Fell beasts of battle are created here by dark arcane craft, as are humanoid soldier races spawned of the slaves in the bazaar.

Two entrances lead into the foundry—the main gate, normally guarded by a force of dark creepers, and a break in the eastern wall caused by one of the recent tremors (see the "Life in Umbraforge" skill challenge and encounter S3 for details). When the PCs enter this area, the regular guards have been overcome and replaced by shadowgoblins loyal to Modra. See the Dark Foundry tactical encounter (page 35) for details.

10. Umbraforge Tower: Sarshan's tower is a monolithic edifice of black stone set atop a rocky rise. Its squared sides are indented and planed in smooth straight lines, and four round towers stand at its corners. The tower rises 80 feet, its upper level sloping to a dome and topped with a four-pointed spire.

From the outside, the PCs can move no closer to the tower than the bridge (see area 6, above). However, even from there, they can see that the open gatehouse is heavily guarded, preventing a frontal assault. See the third part of the adventure (starting on page 38) for the interior of the tower.

attacked Modra as he came through, then chased after him as he fled. (If the PCs come through the gate immediately after Modra, they see the dark creepers tearing out of the cavern.)

The mouth of the chamber emerges from a rocky hillside. There, an incredible vista opens up.

The land before you is like nothing you've ever seen before. A wide plain of gray-green grass and stunted black trees spreads beneath a sky scoured by fast-moving clouds. The sun is bright above but somehow doesn't cut the darkness that drapes every rock and every blade of grass in gray gloom. This is the Shadowfell.

From the mouth of the cavern, a wide and well-traveled road runs in a curving line to the north. There, perhaps a quarter-mile away, a military camp spreads. Buildings are scattered here and there, with tents and pavilions spreading between them. Torches and fires burn brightly against the ever-present shadow, and lone trees and tall stands of gray-green grass are whipped by a hissing wind.

Looming above it all, a rise of black rock to the west is rent by a seething volcanic rift. Black-streaked lava courses from it to descend into a narrow channel, and a permanent pall of glowing red-black smoke rises above it. Over this molten flow, a great stone bridge is arched. This wide east-west road meets the road north from the cavern. North of the bridge, a tall tower stands and a lower building spreads in its shadow.

Approaching Umbraforge

The PCs are likely to expect that they have to make a stealthy approach into the camps outside the tower. However, as they move past the halfway mark from the cavern (whether on the road or in the fields), they are hailed by a pair of dark creeper sentries on patrol. (Assume that the dark creepers' Stealth checks beat the PCs' Perception checks if applicable.)

A voice rings out, and two dark creeper sentries suddenly appear where the shadows of the tall grass had hidden them. "All mercenaries stay within the borders of the camps!" one shouts angrily. "Next time you go wandering, you get shot, sellswords!"

The camps at Umbraforge are completely open to the PCs, who are assumed to be either prospective customers of Sarshan or mercenaries looking to join one of the companies forming up on the plain beneath the tower.

You approach the frontier of the mercenary camps unchallenged, and a virtual city spreads out before you. Beneath patched canvas tents stand open-air taverns, market stalls, apothecaries and herbalists, weaponsmiths and armorers, butchers and greengrocers—all doing roaring trade.

Training grounds open up between the various camps, and soldiers of different races clash against each other with sword and shield. In the quieter corners, you see combat casters training—the flare of arcane fire dancing between them. But as you approach, you notice with surprise that these are not Shadowfell mercenaries for the most part. Though shadar-kai and dark ones are well represented, the fields and camps are packed with orcs and hobgoblins, ogres and trolls, lizardfolk and kobolds and a dozen other monstrous races of the world.

The camps around the tower hold a total population of approximately two thousand. The PCs can find private tent accommodation for 1 gp each per day.

As they discover later, mercenaries and buyers coming to Sarshan's domain typically reach the Shadowfell by way of more distant portals, traveling overland to come here. The PCs should infer from this that it's a good idea to keep their knowledge of the Overlook gate to themselves. If they insist on trumpeting this information, they inevitably attract the attention of a squad of Sarshan's house guards and a bonus combat encounter, to be placed within the skill challenge on the next page. Use the statistics for the shadar-kai in the Library tactical encounter (page 40).

Tremors

The flow from the magma shadow rift has been tapped by Sarshan to fuel the arcane engines within his foundry. Doing so has affected the complex pressure of shadow and elemental fire within the rift. Minor tremors pass through the area at regular intervals, enough to be felt by the PCs but not to affect movement or deal damage. The residents of the camps around the tower have grown used to these tremors, so they pay them no mind.

Over the course of the adventure, the intensity of the tremors builds. See the Smoke and Shadow and Last Stand encounters for more information.

The Brass Key

The brass key plays no further part in this adventure. However, since the PCs cannot return through the Shadowfell gate without it, it is imperative that they hang onto it while they are here.

THE SHADOW RIFT OF UMBRAFORGE

Once the PCs have established themselves in the camps of Umbraforge, they seek out information regarding Sarshan's operations—and discover chilling rumors of war spreading unseen across the world.

Sarshan's Secrets	**Level 6**
Skill Challenge	XP 1,000

As you make your way through the camps around the tower, you have the opportunity to interact with mercenaries and war chiefs, slaves and slave-traders, forge workers, merchants, and more. What information will you discover? Can it help you find a way around without attracting hostile attention?

This skill challenge lets the PCs explore the areas around Umbraforge, posing either as mercenaries or as prospective buyers of Sarshan's services. Interrupt the skill challenge for the Training Session and Smoke and Shadow encounters, which should be played after the PCs attempt a skill check in the challenge in the appropriate area. If the PCs are short on experience (especially if they failed to attain 5th level after the first part of the adventure), increase the level of these encounters.

When the players talk about their intended actions in the skill challenge, ask them what specific area they are working in when they make the check. Certain skill checks have modifiers depending on the area in which they are made, as indicated.

Complexity 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills Arcana, Diplomacy, Endurance, Intimidate, Streetwise.

Other Skills Bluff.

RUMORS

1 "This is Umbraforge, dominion of Sarshan, a trader of great reputation and even greater wealth. The tower, foundry, and forges are his. The camps are those of the mercenaries and slaves whose services he sells across the Shadowfell and the world."

2 "Sarshan is shadar-kai, an outcast who made a name for himself as the leader of a legendary mercenary band known as the Black Arrow. At their height, the Arrow put so much fear in generals and kings alike that Sarshan would take payment to fight for one group, then take a bigger payment from their foe to stand down."

3 "Modra is known well in Umbraforge, but for all the wrong reasons now. He was one of Sarshan's trusted lieutenants before he tried to a broker a weapons deal that Sarshan had already turned down."

4 "The job that Sarshan refused was some orc king's raid on a dwarven citadel. Sarshan never makes a sale if it has a chance of coming back to him, and for good reason. This job went bad, they say, and people know that Modra sold the orc his weapons."

5 "Modra is long gone from Umbraforge and the Shadowfell, believe me. Sarshan's got a long arm and a longer memory. The creeper would have to be crazy to come back here."

6 "The foundry is the new jewel of Sarshan's operations. Its power comes from the fire and shadow driving its furnaces. Sarshan's sages create beasts of battle there, born killers with magic in their blood."

7 "It used to be that Sarshan brokered mercenaries mostly within the Shadowfell, but that's changing. Dark ones and shadar-kai are still his elite troops, but more and more, he brings creatures from the world to Umbraforge for training, then marches them off to places unknown."

8 "The Shadowfell is only a stopping-off place for Sarshan's mercenaries. A force of archons from the Elemental Chaos was here not six months ago. I saw githzerai from the Astral Sea in Umbraforge once. I don't know what job they took for Sarshan, but woe be to whoever got in their way."

9 "Sarshan's slave bazaar is about more than just servants and soldiers. His experiments in the foundry only begin with dumb beasts. He's building new soldier races there, born from the slaves he traffics."

10 "Sarshan's mercenary operations have tripled in size in months past, but it's not the Shadowfell they're fighting in. When his forces are bought and sent on the march, they're bound for portals to the world. Shadar-kai, dark ones, undead, giants, ogres, trolls, gnolls, orcs—Sarshan has the armies of two planes on the march. War is brewing in the world, but the forces that will fight it are moving into position in the Shadowfell, unseen."

Victory In addition to the information in the rumors table, the PCs' movement around the foundry lets them discover a break in the wall out of sight of any guards or patrols. When Leena directs them to the foundry (see below and the Dark Foundry encounter), they have the opportunity to enter unseen.

Defeat The PCs fail to note the break in the foundry wall, and they must fight their way through the main doors in the Dark Foundry tactical encounter.

Whether the PCs fail or succeed in the skill challenge, see Friends on the Inside, below.

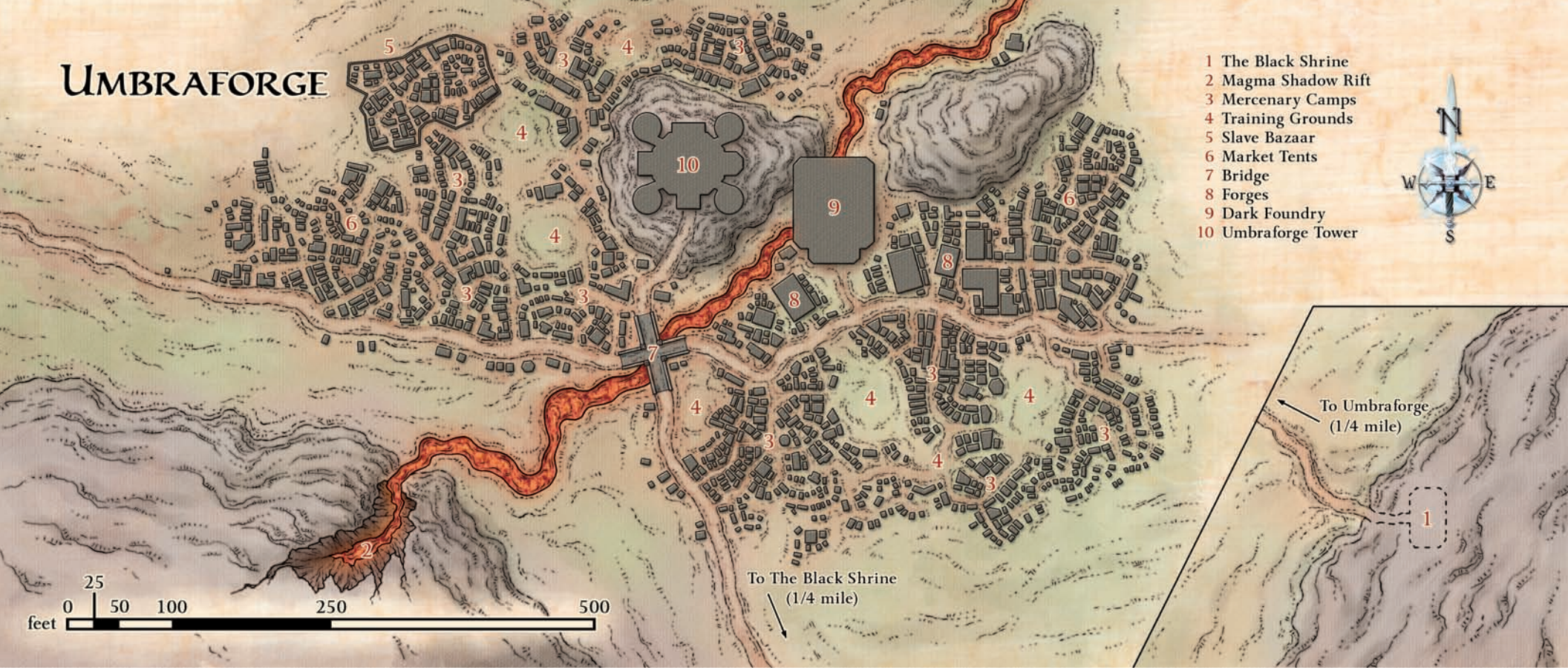
Arcana DC 12 (1 success, maximum 3 successes; see Bluff). This check can be made only in the vicinity of the foundry. On a successful check, the characters learn one piece of information from the rumor table. The PC uses his or her insight into arcane craft to observe the activities taking place around the foundry.

Diplomacy DC 12 (1 success, maximum 2 successes; see Bluff). On a successful check, the PC learns one piece of information from the rumor table. If this skill is used within any of the markets, the PC gains a +2 bonus to the check.

The PC acts as a confidante to one of the creatures of the camps.

Endurance DC 12 (1 success, maximum 2 successes). This check can be made only in the mercenary camps or the training grounds. On a successful check, the characters learn one piece of information from the rumor table. On a failed check, any subsequent checks in the skill challenge made by the PC in the mercenary camps or the training grounds take a –2 penalty.

The PC hooks up with a mercenary unit for martial training, keeping his or her ears open for information.



Intimidate DC 7 (1 success, maximum 3 successes; see Bluff). On a successful check, the characters learn one piece of information from the rumor table. If this skill is used within the slave bazaar or the markets, the PC gains a +2 bonus to the check. Once a PC makes an Intimidate check, any subsequent Bluff, Diplomacy, or Streetwise checks he or she makes take a –2 penalty.

The PC singles out weaker characters for coercion and questioning.

Streetwise DC 12 (1 success, maximum 2 successes). On a successful check, the characters learn one piece of information from the rumor table. This check can be made only in the markets, the slave bazaar, or the mercenary camps.

The PC seeks out rumors in the mess halls and tent taverns that spread around the tower.

Bluff DC 17 (0 successes). On a successful check, the PC gains a +2 bonus to his or her next Arcana, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

The PC plays the part of an Umbraforge insider or a powerful visitor to the tower.

Rumors of War

As the PCs progress through the skill challenge, they hear rumors from the table below. Information should be given out according to the area the PCs are actively working in, or you can decide what to reveal based on their specific lines of inquiry.

The rumors of war (including the fact that Sarshan is brokering powerful forces from the Elemental Chaos and the Astral Dominion) play no direct part in this adventure. However, they provide hooks and foreshadowing for later episodes of the adventure path.

Friends on the Inside

In the course of the skill challenge, the PCs meet Leena, a shadar-kai war witch working to train combat casters in the mercenary camps. She is a follower of Sarshan and a former ally of Modra, but her sense of honor caused her to break with the dark

creeper when he decided to work behind Sarshan's back. Introduce her to the PCs early on in the skill challenge, making her one of the many people they talk to or eavesdrop on in their attempts to uncover the truth behind Sarshan's operations.

The shadar-kai witch wears a black cloak edged with adamantine beads, and she keeps her long hair plaited to hang down her back. Gold piercings line her ears and lower lip, and a black starburst tattoo encloses her right eye.

Whether the PCs succeed or fail on the initial check in the skill challenge, Leena suspects that they are not who they pretend to be. She keeps an eye on the party as they complete the skill challenge. Then at the end of the skill challenge (whether the PCs succeed or fail), Leena seeks them out.

Leena is a kind of moral reflection of Sarshan. Every bit the opportunist, she is happy to take advantage of the march to war as long as it offers profit for her. However, like many of her kind, Leena's conception of the world is as a land of weak, immoral, and alien creatures. The mercenaries and warmasters who travel to the Shadowfell to do business with Sarshan do nothing to soften this impression. In meeting the PCs, Leena has a chance to witness a nobility and a sense of purpose she has never seen in creatures of the world before.

Though the PCs might be concerned about Leena betraying them to Sarshan's forces, any successful Insight check shows her trustworthiness.

Shadar-kai War Witch	**Level 5 Controller**
Medium shadow humanoid	XP 200
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision
HP 61; **Bloodied** 30	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	
Speed 6; see also *shadow jaunt*	
⊕ **Blackfire Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic**	
+9 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 fire and necrotic damage.	
✧ **Beshadowed Mind** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Will; 2d6 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target has no line of sight to anything more than 2 squares from it (save ends).	
✧ **Shadow Bind** (standard; encounter)	
Tendrils of shadow make separate attacks against 3 different targets: Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**	
The shadar-kai war witch teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of her next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +7, Arcana +11, Religion +11, Stealth +12	
Str 13 (+3)	**Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 13 (+3)	**Int** 19 (+6) **Cha** 17 (+5)

Modra's Gambit

After their last success or failure in the skill challenge, Leena approaches the PCs. Having clandestinely observed their inquiries, she has guessed that the traitor Modra—once a close friend—is their target. After revealing that she knows the PCs' plan, she confides the following.

"Modra and I worked together for a time, but when he elected to go behind Sarshan's back, I told him we were done. I heard word of him in the camps even before you started asking around. He has a plan to disrupt Sarshan's operations by destroying the foundry, then the tower. Sarshan has a private tunnel connecting the two, and Modra is planning on venting the foundry's destructive energy there. A mass of mercenaries is moving out tonight. He'll be using that as cover when he goes inside.

"Modra's made his bargain with fate, and honor decrees that he die for his betrayal. He won't get tears from me. But if Sarshan captures him, he'll die slowly. If it's you, I'll hope you make it quick."

Training Session

Encounter Level 5 (1,000 XP)

Setup

As the PCs wander into one of Umbraforge's combat training grounds, they inadvertently find themselves targeted by a squad of mercenaries. These young ogres see the PCs as a way to show off for their more powerful kin.

2 ogre umbral savages (O)
2 ogre umbral skirmishers (S)
1 tangler beetle (B)

As the PCs cross the training grounds, read:

You find yourselves surrounded by a mob of hulking ogres, one leading an enormous beetle on a leash. In broken Common, the largest shouts: "You mercenaries? You think you good enough to fight alongside Bonecruncher clan? Think again!" As the group moves to attack, you see a crowd of ogres move up to watch, shouting insults at you and words of encouragement to your foes.

Close Combat

Though this encounter takes place in the open space of the training grounds, the shaded area around the edge of the tactical map represents a very real barrier. Some two dozen ogre spectators gather around to hem the PCs and their assailants in, jeeringly pushing them back into the thick of combat if they stumble too close.

Any creature that enters one of the shaded squares is pushed back by the ogre mob. Medium and Small creatures slide 1d6 squares; Large creatures slide 1d4 squares. Roll 1d6 for direction relative to the edge or corner the creature is pushed back from (1–2 left diagonal, 3–4 straight back, 5–6 right diagonal). A creature whose slide would take it into an occupied square stops moving and must make a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check to stay standing. On a failed check, the creature falls prone in the square in which it stopped.

Tactics

The ogres are unsophisticated combatants. The savages tear into the closest foes while the beetle attempts to immobilize the strongest-looking melee combatants with *entangling spittle* between bite attacks. The skirmishers make a *hurling charge* against spellcasters, then stay in constant motion in melee.

The ogres would rather die than lose face in front of their kin. All creatures here fight to the death.

Development

The ogres are spoiling for a fight, but their primary goal is to make themselves look good. If the PCs break off or ask for quarter with all the party members at bloodied hit points or fewer, the ogres accept their concession and let them go. However, the PCs can make no further Intimidate checks in the skill challenge.

If the ogres fall, their disgusted clan kin make no effort at retribution. Additionally, a PC gains a +2 bonus to the next Intimidate check made in the skill challenge.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Torches flicker along the edges of the training ground (bright throughout).

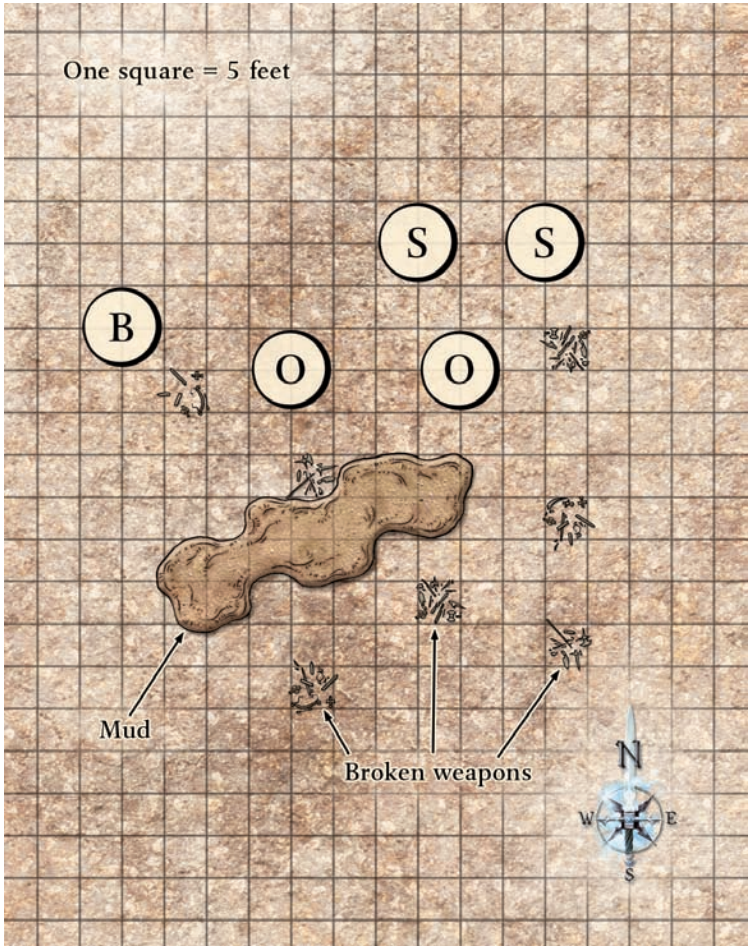
Foul-Smelling Mud: A field of wastewater has created a foul mud pit in the middle of the training ground. These squares are difficult terrain. Creatures knocked prone in the mud are weakened (save ends).

Broken Weapons: The remains of shattered blades and spears litter the battlefield. A creature moving through one of these squares is subject to an attack: +5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 damage.

2 Ogre Umbral Skirmishers (S)	**Level 5 Skirmisher**
Large natural humanoid	XP 200 each
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +2
HP 67; **Bloodied** 33	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15	
Speed 8	
⊕ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage; see also *skirmish*.	
➢ **Javelin** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 10/20; +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage; see also skirmish.	
↓ **Hurling Charge** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
The ogre umbral skirmisher makes a javelin attack followed by a charge attack.	
Skirmish +1d8	
If, on its turn, the ogre umbral skirmisher ends its move at least 4 squares away from its starting point, it deals an extra 1d8 damage on its melee attacks until the start of its next turn.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common, Giant
Str 18 (+6)	**Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 19 (+6)	**Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+0)
Equipment hide armor, club, quiver of 6 javelins	

2 Ogre Umbral Savages (O)	Level 5 Brute
Large natural humanoid	XP 200 each
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +2
HP 81; **Bloodied** 40	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13	
Speed 8	
(+) **Greatclub** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 2; +8 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage.	
Flatten (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**	
The ogre umbral savage makes a greatclub attack; on a hit, the target is also pushed 1 square and knocked prone.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Giant
Str 21 (+7)	**Dex** 11 (+2) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 21 (+7)	**Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+0)
Equipment hide armor, greatclub	

Tangler Beetle (B)	Level 5 Controller
Large natural beast	XP 200
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 62; **Bloodied** 31	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14	
Speed 6	
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.	
Entangling Spittle (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
Ranged 5; +8 vs. Reflex; the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 18 (+6)	**Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 8 (+1)



Smoke and Shadow

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

Setup

As the PCs make their way alongside the area of the slave bazaar, they feel another of Umbraforge's intermittent earth tremors. However, this tremor is accompanied by a volcanic fissure that acts as a portal to the Elemental Chaos, spewing forth a pack of creatures bent on destruction.

2 fire bats (B)
1 hell hound (H)
1 magma hurler (M)

As the PCs approach the slave bazaar, read:

A sudden rumbling rises as another tremor rattles through the area. However, while previous incidents have passed quickly, this one builds to a furious shaking that threatens to knock you off your feet. At the same time, a blast of molten rock and raw darkness erupts from the earth ahead of you.

The fissure abuts the palisade fence that blocks off the slave bazaar. The PCs can hear shouts of fear as the slaves beyond the fence flee the area. However, while the rift is not an imminent threat, the creatures that emerge from it are.

Even as the tremor subsides, you see movement through a haze of smoke and shadow. From the boiling fissure, a pair of winged shapes erupts—plus a large hound and a humanoid creature claws their way up behind them. All four creatures writhe with living flame, howling as they attack.

These creatures have been formed from the raw essence of the Elemental Chaos by the increasing instability of the magma shadow rift.

Tactics

The fire bats keep to the air, using their *fiery swoop* to target as many PCs as possible. If only two characters can be targeted, both bats attack them in turn.

The hell hound stays in the thick of combat, trying to maximize the number of targets in the area of its *fire shield* and *fiery breath*. While waiting for that power to recharge, the hound focuses its bite attacks on lightly armored PCs.

The magma hurler stays at the edge of combat, hurling its *magma ball* into the midst of any group of PCs to maximize the effect of a miss.

Because all these creatures have resistance to fire damage, they don't worry about striking each other with their attacks. Likewise, they cross through the rift at will, hoping to prevent the PCs from following them.

Development

The vent continues to spew fire and shadow for a few minutes after combat ends. It then begins to slowly close until all traces of it have gone.

The party's selfless act of bravery within sight of the slave bazaar does not go unnoticed. Any subsequent Diplomacy or Streetwise checks made in the area gain a +2 bonus.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Torches flicker along the fenced perimeter of the slave bazaar (bright 5). The rift exudes a dull red glow (dim 5).

Rift Vent: A hissing geyser of fire and shadow spews out from this section of upthrust ground. Any creature that enters the rift takes 2d12 fire damage. Any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the rift takes 1d12 fire damage.

The rift's power is tied to the Elemental Chaos. As a result, it deals no damage to the creatures it creates (including the monsters in this encounter).

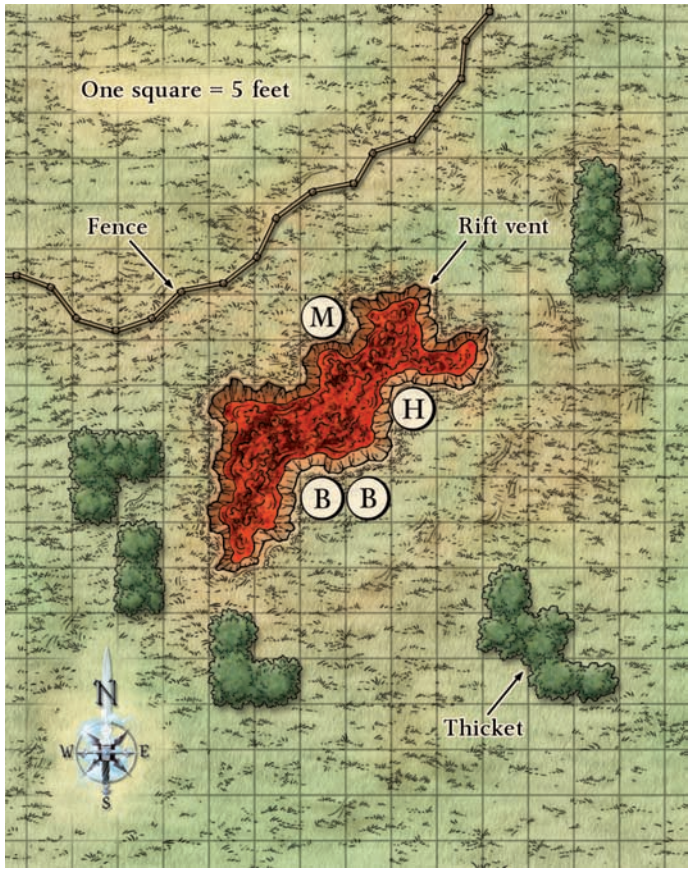
Thickets: These areas of dense undergrowth provide concealment and are difficult terrain. Any power with the fire descriptor that deals damage in a square containing a thicket sets that square and all adjacent squares ablaze. The thicket burns for 2 rounds before flaring out, during which time it deals 1d8 fire damage to any creatures in the area.

Fence: This 8-foot-high palisade of logs lashed together with rope surrounds the slave bazaar. It takes a successful DC 10 Athletics check to climb the fence.

Hell Hound (H) **Level 7 Brute**
Medium elemental beast (fire) XP 300
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +11
Fire Shield (Fire) aura 1; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura takes 1d6 fire damage.
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18
Resist 20 fire
Speed 7
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 plus 1d8 fire damage.
✧ **Fiery Breath** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Fire**
Close blast 3; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 fire damage.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+3)

Magma Hurler (M) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium elemental humanoid (earth, fire) XP 175
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +4
HP 41; **Bloodied** 20
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 13
Immune petrification; **Resist** 10 fire; **Vulnerable** cold (slowed until the end of the magma hurler's next turn)
Speed 4
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.
↗ **Magma Ball** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 15; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 6 fire damage. *Miss:* Creatures adjacent to the target take 1d6 fire damage.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Skills Endurance +7
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 22 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 11 (+2) **Int** 5 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+1)

2 Fire Bats (B) **Level 5 Skirmisher**
Medium elemental beast (fire) XP 200 each
Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 60; **Bloodied** 30
AC 20; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 13
Resist 10 fire
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 8; see also *fiery swoop*
⊕ **Fiery Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
↓ **Fiery Swoop** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
The fire bat shifts up to 4 squares and can move through occupied squares as it moves. It makes a melee basic attack against any creature whose space it enters. The fire bat cannot attack a target more than once in this fashion, and it must end its movement in an unoccupied square.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 6 (+0) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 7 (+0)



Dark Foundry

Encounter Level 8 (1,852 XP)

Setup

Modra and a band of shadowgoblins loyal to him have taken control of Sarshan's dark foundry after killing the dark creeper guards there. Modra plans to disrupt the great arcane engines that leech power from the flow of fire and shadow, destroying his former master's operations as a means of ending his threat.

8 shadowgoblin maulers (M)
2 shadowgoblin snarlers (S)
1 death boar (B)
Modra, dark creeper shadowborn stalker

As the PCs prepare to enter the foundry, read:

A claxon call of horns sounds out from the west. A haze of red light glimmers against the clouds as the cascade of the magma shadow rift flares. As Leena predicted, a huge force of mercenaries is on the move, heading out along the east road. The area around the foundry is deserted; the guards at the tower and the bridge have turned eastward to watch as Sarshan's forces move out.

Into the Foundry

If the PCs succeeded on the "Sarshan's Secrets" skill challenge (page 27), they enter the foundry through a break in the wall, out of sight of any guards or patrols. It takes a successful DC 17 Thievery check to secure the wall against collapse, followed by a successful DC 12 Strength check to open the break wide enough for a Medium creature to squeeze through. Once inside, the PCs can attack Modra and his guards with surprise.

If the PCs failed the skill challenge, they cannot find the break in the wall and must enter the foundry through the front doors. Getting the doors open requires either a successful DC 12 Strength check or a successful DC 21 Bluff check to convince the shadowgoblin guards that the PCs are allies of their master. If the PCs can open the door with a single Strength check, they gain surprise. Otherwise, the shadowgoblins are ready for them. Any combat in the entrance is noticed by Modra and the others.

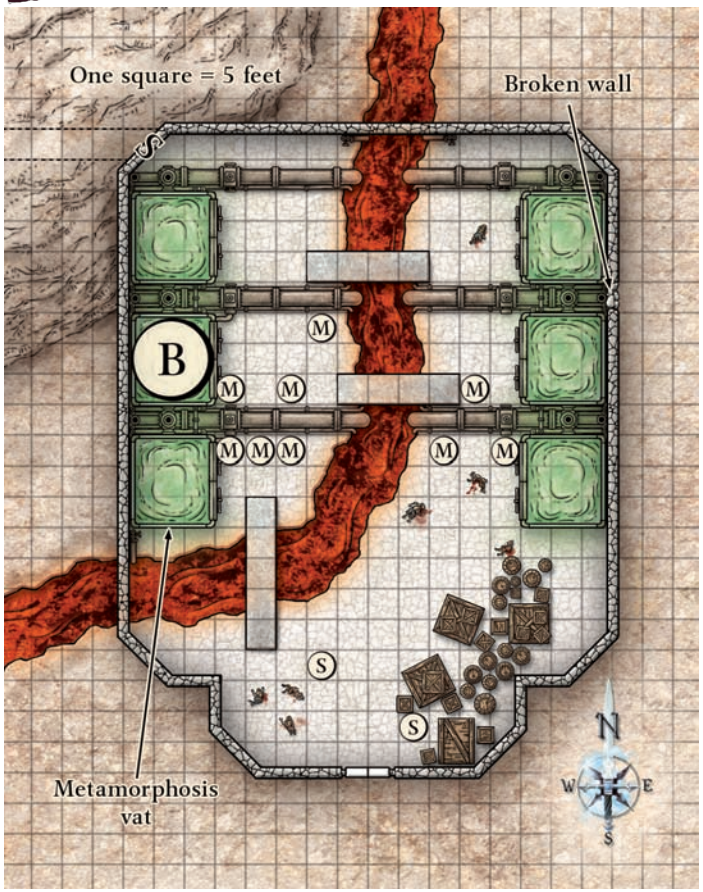
When the PCs enter the foundry, read:

The red glow of the lava trench is shrouded by shifting clouds of shadow and steam. Huge stone vats with steel doors line both sides of this massive chamber, where great arrangements of pipes and vents connect them.

When the PCs can see Modra and his followers, read:

Two squads of what look like hobgoblins, their bodies seemingly cloaked in shadow, work here, supervised by another cloaked figure. They work busily at two sections of pipe that divert and channel the lava flow. Closer to the door, two other shadowgoblins stand guard.

Modra is intentionally dressed in dark clothes that make him indistinguishable from his shadowgoblin minions. Place him as a goblin initially unless a PC succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check. As soon as combat begins, Modra rushes to the nearest vat and breaks its seals, releasing the two-headed death boar and revealing himself.



When Modra releases the death boar, read:

The dark creeper snarls as he sprints for the closest vat, pulling down on a great lever next to the door. He dodges out of the way of a blast of steam. As the door opens, it spills a huge mass to the ground in a fountain of viscous green fluid. Out of it rises an enormous two-headed boar, bellowing as it claws the ground.

The creature takes 1 round to shake itself out of its birth stupor before it attacks.

Modra, Shadowborn Stalker **Level 7 Elite Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid, dark creeper XP 600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
HP 124; **Bloodied** 62; see also *killing dark*
AC 23 (see also *dark step*), **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage.

Double Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires combat advantage; Modra makes 2 short sword attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +12 vs. AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.

Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter) ✦ **Zone**
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of Modra's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except Modra. Any creature entirely within the area (except Modra) is blinded.

Combat Advantage
Modra deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target he has combat advantage against.

Dark Step (move; at-will)
Modra moves up to 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks, and gains combat advantage against any target that he ends his move adjacent to.

Cloak of Shadows (minor; encounter) ✦ **Illusion**
Modra is invisible until the end of his next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +9, Stealth +12, Thievery +12
Str 11 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 13 (+4) **Cha** 13 (+4)
Equipment black cloak, chainmail, short sword, 5 daggers

Tactics

The maulers throw themselves at the PCs in the defense of their master, attacking by twos and threes to take advantage of *shadow soldier*. The snarlers use *snarling shot* as often as possible, attempting to immobilize foes for the boar. The shadowgoblins use the terrain of the foundry to best advantage. See Features of the Area.

2 Shadowgoblin Snarlers (S) **Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 200 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 51; **Bloodied** 25
AC 18; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14
Speed 6

Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the hobgoblin archer grants an ally within 5 squares of it a +2 bonus to its next ranged attack roll against the same target.

Snarling Shot (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized by strands of shadow (save ends).

Shadowgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the shadowgoblin snarler suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The snarler makes a saving throw against the effect.

Shadow Soldier
The shadowgoblin snarler gains concealment while at least one shadowgoblin ally is adjacent to it.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Athletics +6, Stealth +11
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, longsword, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows

If it cannot attack a prone target, the death boar attacks heavily armored PCs, making two gore attacks in an attempt to maximize damage and knock foes prone. If two PCs are adjacent, it makes *a furious charge* and separate bite attacks on each target, hoping to knock both prone or into the lava trench.

Having fled from the PCs before, Modra is determined to finish them this time. He uses *dark step* to maintain combat advantage as he moves from foe to foe, making *double strike* attacks against single targets if possible. He uses *cloak of shadows* or *cloud of darkness* to reorient himself in the fight if he is pressed by more than one PC or targeted with ranged attacks.

All the creatures here fight to the death.

Death Boar (B) **Level 6 Elite Brute**
Huge natural beast (mount) XP 500

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2
HP 170; **Bloodied** 85; see also **death strike**
AC 19; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8
Action Points 1

Gore (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 9 damage against a prone target.

Frenzied Gore (standard; at-will)
The death boar makes two gore attacks. If it hits with both attacks against the same target, the target is knocked prone.

Death Strike (when reduced to 0 hit points)
The death boar makes a gore attack.

Furious Charge
When a death boar charges, its gore attacks deal an extra 5 damage, pushes the targets 2 squares, and knocks the targets prone on a hit.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+2)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+2)

8 Shadowgoblin Maulers (A) **Level 8 Minion**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 88 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Speed 6

Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 6 damage.

Shadowgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when the shadowgoblin mauler suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
The mauler makes a saving throw against the effect.

Shadow Soldier
The shadowgoblin mauler gains concealment while at least one shadowgoblin ally is adjacent to it.

Combat Advantage
The shadowgoblin mauler deals an extra 2 damage on melee attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Athletics +10, Stealth +11
Str 19 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 11 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)
Equipment black leather armor, mace

Development

The PCs' intervention here prevents Modra from completing his sabotage and destroying the tower. However, the damage his team has done is enough to cause a failure of the foundry's systems during the Last Stand tactical encounter. If the PCs investigate the area where the shadowgoblins were working, they note damage to the great pipes channeling the lava flow, though it appears superficial.

Within the vats, the PCs can see various creatures in the midst of a dark transformation. A successful DC 22 Perception check made to search the area confirms the rumors the PCs have heard—half the creatures here are humanoids mutated into horrible warlike forms, their skin growing spiky armor plates, their hands turned to razor-sharp claws, and so on.

Into the Tower

The secret door to the west leads to a tunnel serving as Sarshan's private access between the foundry and the tower. It can be located with a successful DC 20 Perception check.

After what they've observed around Umbraforge, the PCs should hopefully be ready to enter the tower in search of more information about Sarshan's plans. However, if they linger too long in the foundry, feel free to have a squad of dark creeper and shadar-kai guards appear at the main doors. Remind the PCs of the secret door if necessary, then give them time to move into the tunnel before being spotted by the guards.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The chamber is lit by the fiery glow of the lava flow (dim throughout).

Ceiling: The arched ceiling rises to a height of 30 feet.

Lava Trench: The river of lava and liquid shadow courses through this chamber, interrupted by a network of pipes and conduits that magically siphon off arcane power for Sarshan's metamorphosis vats. The sluggish surface of the lava rises to 5 feet below the lip of the trench. Creatures entering the lava take 2d12 fire damage per round. (The processes by which Sarshan's equipment draws arcane energy from the lava trench reduces the damage as compared to outside.)

The temperature in the enclosed foundry is stifling. When first entering the area, creatures must make successful DC 17 Endurance checks against the heat or lose one healing surge. (Modra and the shadowgoblins protected themselves with magic before entering the foundry.) Creatures that have no healing surges remaining lose hit points equal to their level.

When a creature is first bloodied, it must make a successful

Crates and Barrels: These crates and barrels contain the toxic reagents that fill the vats. Squares containing barrels and crates provide cover. A stack of crates stands 5 feet high and can be climbed with a successful DC 10 Athletics check. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up onto a barrel.

Bridges: These rough stone bridges arch 5 feet above the ground (so they rise 10 feet above the lava in the trench). They have no railings. A creature running across a bridge must make a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check or slip and fall to the lava below. A creature that slips can make a saving throw to throw itself at the opposite bank. Creatures that fall into the lava take 1d10 falling damage plus 2d12 fire damage per round.

Vents and Piping: Each vat is connected to a complex mass of metal and ceramic piping that plunges into the lava trench. Most of these pipes run up to and across the ceiling, but a series of main conduits runs across the foundry floor, each a bundle of pipe set with pressure release valves.

As a standard action, a creature can smash through a pressure release valve anywhere along the length of the conduit to create a close blast 3; +5 vs. Reflex, 1d8 fire damage.

A creature that ends its turn adjacent to a section of conduit takes 1d6 fire damage. Stepping over a conduit costs 2 squares of movement.

Bodies: These dark creeper guards were killed guarding against Modra's incursion.

Metamorphosis Vats: These great vats hold the fruits of Sarshan's dark experiments. Each stone vat is 15 feet on a side, open at the top, and fronted by a huge steel door with a quick-release lever. As a standard action, a creature can open the vat, releasing the creature within and a wave of viscous green fluid that creates a close blast 5; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d10 damage and the target is slowed (save ends).

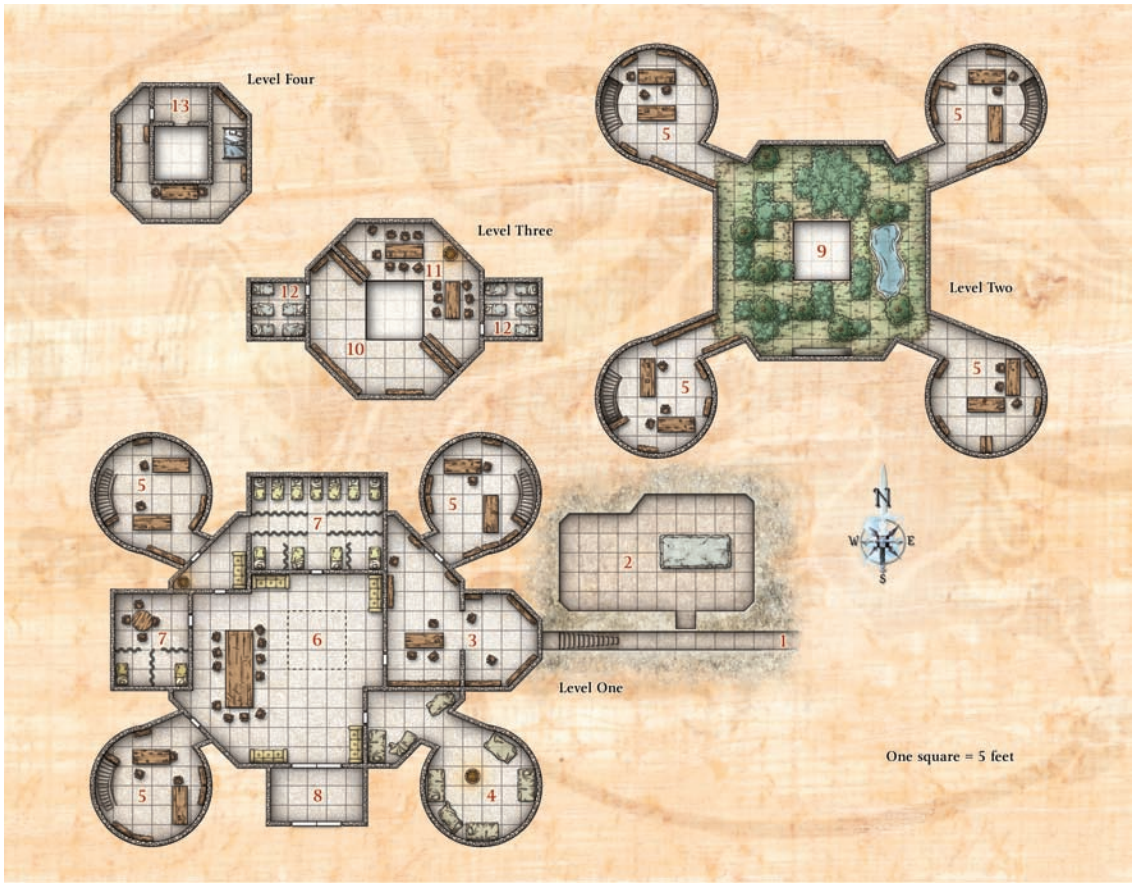
Unless the PCs are having too easy a time with this encounter, any additional creatures in the vats have not completed their transformation. They die immediately after being released.

Part 3: Umbraforge Tower

From the foundry, the PCs make their way to the lower level of the tower by way of Sarshan's private tunnel access. There, they take on Sarshan's guards, some of his allies, and finally come face to face with the shadar-kai.

Levitation Lift

Within the center of the tower, a 15-foot wide opening in the ceiling or floor of each level serves as a magical levitation lift for Sarshan and his servants. Characters stepping into any square of the open area are subject to a levitation effect. Characters hover in midair until they mentally command the lift to move them. As a move action, a character can rise or descend one level, or can move up to 15 feet horizontally (from one side of the lift to the other). As a minor action, a character can shift 1 square horizontally. Moving from the tower's lower level to Sarshan's quarters on the top level thus requires three move actions (to climb) and a minor action (to shift from the open lift to the floor again).



While within the lift (whether moving or not), a creature is unsteady, taking a –2 penalty to AC and Reflex defense. Characters who stand within the area of the lift on the tower's ground floor feel unsteady on their feet and take the above penalties. However, unless they mentally command the lift to carry them up, they can move through the area normally.

Creatures that move into the open area of the lift (as opposed to simply stepping into it) continue their movement through midair. A creature can travel across the open space of the lift by making a DC 15 Acrobatics check as part of the move action that takes it into the lift. On a result of 20 or higher, the creature gains 2 extra squares of movement. On a failed check, the creature loses momentum and slides to the center of the lift.

Shock and Aftershock

The penultimate climax of the adventure (Last Stand tactical encounter) takes place in the aftermath of another tremor caused by the magma shadow rift. Foreshadow this by having harmless tremors ripple through the tower at different points.

No Quarter

The tower is an occupied fortress, and once this stage of the adventure begins, the PCs have no opportunity to take an extended rest. Early on, the Library encounter can easily spill over into the Great Hall tactical encounter, which can in turn pull in additional guards from the gatehouse for an extended melee. This might create problems later if the party returns to Overlook since the climactic battle could have already exhausted their healing surges and daily powers. Though Sarshan regularly uses the foundry tunnel, he is not aware of the lost shrine there (area 2). If the PCs need an extra boost, that hidden chamber provides a secure place for them to rest up.

Umbraforge Tower

This is Sarshan's domain, and with the number of troops at his disposal, he doesn't fear attack. His guards watch the tower's interior and gate house, but it has no ramparts or exterior patrols.

Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: The interior of the tower is polished gray marble from floor to ceiling. The ceilings on each level of the tower are uniformly 20 feet high.

Doors and Windows: Wooden doors within the tower are unlocked (with the exception of the gate house). Each room of the tower features narrow windows looking out on the ground below. These windows are wide enough only for a Small character to squeeze through.

Illumination: Magic lamps shed dim light in all areas of the tower, allowing those with low-light vision (most of the tower's inhabitants) to see clearly.

1. Foundry Tunnel: This 5-foot wide tunnel connects the foundry with the library in the tower. Sarshan and his personal guards are the only ones allowed access to it. Though it is locked from the foundry side, the library door opens easily.

2. Lost Shrine: Halfway along the foundry tunnel, an undiscovered secret door (DC 26 Perception) leads to an ancient shrine. The crumbling walls of this chamber were once covered with muted frescoes, but only fragments of plaster now remain. In the center of the room, a black stone altar rises, its surface buried beneath a thick layer of dust. Sarshan does not know of the shrine's existence, and the PCs can take an extended rest here.

3. Library (Tactical Encounter): These two adjoining chambers are the research center for Sarshan's sages. Shelves of books and scrolls line the walls here. Two shadar-kai guard the entrance to the foundry, while two more are working here when the PCs enter.

4. Guest Quarters (Tactical Encounter): Important visitors reside in these well-appointed rooms while in the tower. The guest quarters are currently occupied by a pack of gnolls negotiating a mercenary contract for their clan.

5. Laboratory: These tower chambers are all functionally identical, though you can change up their specific descriptions as need be. Dark experiments realized in the foundry are first carried out here. The various laboratories feature a wealth of alchemical equipment and reagents, ritual components, dead creatures in jars of clear oil, vials of brightly colored powders and viscous fluids, and other experimental gear.

The lower northeast laboratory (adjoining the library) is empty. All other laboratories have a 50% chance of being occupied by a noncombatant shadar-kai or dark one sage at work. If the PCs attack, treat the sages as minions with no attacks of their own. However, unless they are attacked, the sages of the tower assume that the PCs work for Sarshan. They yell at the characters for interrupting their work, but allow them to pass through. If combat occurs in area 9, sages in adjacent laboratories cower under a table until the danger passes.

6. Great Hall (Tactical Encounter): Most of the main floor is given over to this visitor's gallery and feast hall. Dark tapestries line the walls, and thick carpets cover the floors. A banquet table occupies the center of the room, and comfortable couches are arrayed along the walls. A fire pit before the doors burns with magical flame. When the PCs enter, a pair of shadar-kai guards and one of Sarshan's dark one allies are arguing here.

7. Sages' Quarters: These chambers are the residences of the sages who labor to perfect Sarshan's vile experiments. Each chamber has four beds and is occupied by two noncombatant shadar-kai or dark one sages, either sleeping (if no combat has occurred in an adjacent chamber) or cowering beneath a bed (if it has). Treat the sages as minions with no attacks.

8. Gate House: The interior doors to area 6 are locked and barred, requiring a successful DC 26 Thievery check and a successful DC 21 Strength check to open. The exterior stone double doors are normally open so the guards within can see the road and the bridge. They can be closed with two standard actions (one for each door) and barred from the inside (a successful DC 40 Strength check to open).

Four shadar-kai warriors and four shadar-kai chainfighters are on guard here at all times. However, they do not expect trouble from inside the tower, and so they are distracted if the PCs enter from area 6. Use the statistics from the Library and Great Hall tactical encounters.

9. Garden of Shadows (Tactical Encounter): The second level of the tower is given over to a shadar-kai pleasure garden. Tall trees, hoary ferns, and dense thickets of shrubs grow here. Within the foliage of this chamber lurk three rot scarab swarms and a shadow beetle kept as pets by Sarshan. They ignore shadow creatures but attack all others.

To the south stands the teleportation portal that takes Sarshan to the black shrine (see area 1 on page 25). Normally the portal can be used only by Sarshan.

10. Training Floor: This is the private training area for the guards of the tower.

11. Guards' Mess: Two large tables fill this mess hall, and a magical fire burns in the fire pit to the northeast. Six guards are here at any given time—they can be warriors, gloomblades, or chainfighters (use the statistics from the Library and Great Hall tactical encounters).

12. Guards' Barracks: Sarshan's house guards live here when off duty. Five sets of triple bunks in each chamber house thirty guards total, with half the bunks occupied at any given time. Guards found here have a 50% chance of being asleep, which means they require 2 rounds to grab weapons if attacked. Guards not sleeping are distracted and require 1 round to grab weapons. Use the statistics for the shadar-kai warrior, gloomblade, and chainfighter from the Library and Great Hall tactical encounters. None of the guards are in armor; they take a –4 penalty to AC.

13. Sarshan's Chambers: The shadar-kai's sanctum occupies the space beneath the tower's upper dome. Unlike the lower levels, the open area of the levitation lift is walled off here. The door here is locked (DC 26 Thievery). This area contains only mundane personal effects, since Sarshan keeps all important documents and relics hidden outside the tower.

Library

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

Four members of Sarshan's personal guard are here—two warriors guarding the access to the foundry passage, a gloomblade running an errand for one of the tower's sages, and a witch in the midst of researching an experiment.

2 shadar-kai warriors (S)
1 shadar-kai gloomblade (G)
1 shadar-kai witch (W)
When the PCs can see into this area, read:

Dim light fills this area from globes of gray glass set around the room. Shelves of books and scrolls line the walls here, and a large table covered with scrolls and bound volumes dominates an adjoining chamber. A female shadar-kai stands there, looking up in astonishment. Two shadar-kai warriors, katars at their belts, scramble away from the door in surprise. A third warrior is digging through books on a nearby shelf, his greatsword leaning against the wall a few feet away.

The shadar-kai know that only Sarshan uses the foundry tunnel. They treat the PCs as intruders and attack at once.

Shadow Dart Attack

In addition to the guards stationed here, a deadly trap wards this entrance into the tower. The trap is not active when the PCs enter, but it is manually triggered by the shadar-kai witch in the second round of combat.

When the trap is triggered, read:

The shadar-kai backpedals toward the door, hitting a mechanical switch set into the wall. With a hiss, the air is filled with streaks of shadow.

Once the trap is triggered, darts of magical shadow fill the air in both sections of the room. They shoot out from tiny holes in the frames of the chamber's bookshelves.

Shadow Dart Wall **Level 6 Blaster**
Trap 250 XP

A host of immaterial black darts streaks through the air, filling the room with a deadly web of shadow.

Trap: Each round on its initiative, the trap fires a barrage of immaterial shadow darts that randomly attack 2d4 targets in range. Shadow creatures are not targeted by the magic darts.

Perception
- ✦ DC 17: The character notices the small holes within the frames of the bookshelves along the walls.
- ✦ DC 21: The character notices the switch by the west door.

Initiative +7

Trigger
When the switch beside the west door is flipped (a standard action), the trap rolls initiative.

Attack
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Targets: 2d4 targets (not including shadow creatures) in range.
Attack: +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 2 damage and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends)

Countermeasures
- ✦ A character adjacent to the switch, which is now locked into its position, can disable the trap with a DC 21 Thievery check.
- ✦ A character who ends his or her turn directly adjacent to one of the interior walls (not adjacent to the open doorway) gains a +5 bonus to AC against the dart attacks.
- ✦ A character who moves no more than 1 square on a turn gains a +5 bonus to AC against the dart attacks.

Tactics

The shadar-kai warriors focus their first attacks on the most powerful-looking melee combatants, hoping to restrain them using *cage of gloom*. They use *shadow jaunt* consistently to protect themselves from damage, pulling down a bookshelf first to slow pursuers and compensate for their decreased movement.

The gloomblade uses *veil of shadows* to move invisibly between attacks, using *gloomstrike* to blind PCs making ranged attacks. Once bloodied, he uses **shadow jaunt** to protect himself from damage as he attacks the strongest-looking melee combatants.

Shadar-kai Witch (W) **Level 7 Controller**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 300

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 77; **Bloodied** 38
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19
Speed 6; see also *shadow jaunt*

Blackfire Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic**
+11 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 fire and necrotic damage.

Beshadowed Mind (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target has no line of sight to anything more than 2 squares from it (save ends).

Deep Shadow (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ✦ **Necrotic**
Aura 2; thick, writhing shadows surround the shadar-kai witch. The witch and any other shadow creatures in the aura gain concealment. In addition, enemies that enter or start their turns in the aura take 5 necrotic damage, and enemies (including flying ones) also treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain. The shadar-kai witch can sustain the aura as a minor action. However, the effect ends if she uses **shadow jaunt** or moves more than half her speed on her turn.

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The shadar-kai witch teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of her next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +8, Arcana +12, Religion +12, Stealth +13

Str 13 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 13 (+4)	**Int** 19 (+7)	**Cha** 17 (+6)

Shadar-kai Gloomblade (G)	Level 6 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +12	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27; see also **veil of shadows**	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15	
Speed 5; see also *shadow jaunt*	
(+) **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+11 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage; see also **gloomstrike**.	
Gloomstrike	
If the shadar-kai gloomblade hits a target that can't see him, the target is blinded until the end of the gloomblade's next turn.	
Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**	
The shadar-kai gloomblade teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of his next turn.	
Veil of Shadows (move; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**	
The shadar-kai gloomblade turns invisible and moves up to his speed. The gloomblade cannot use this power while bloodied.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +14, Stealth +14	
Str 17 (+6)	**Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 12 (+4)	**Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment chainmail, greatsword	

In the first round, the witch uses *beshadowed mind* against the first PC through the secret door. She then activates the shadow dart wall trap in the second round. In the third round, she uses her *deep shadow* power, maintaining it as she closes with the warriors to grant them concealment. She uses *blackfire touch* against PCs at the periphery of melee, reserving subsequent *beshadowed mind* attacks for spellcasters and ranged combatants.

If the witch is bloodied and the other shadar-kai are killed, she flees to area 6 (Great Hall tactical encounter) through the closest door and summons the shadar-kai chainfighters there. If the PCs enter area 6, add the witch to the Great Hall encounter. If the PCs stay in area 3, the chainfighters and the witch enter after 1 round. The dark haunter remains in area 6 but sends the mad wraith in to attack the PCs.

2 Shadar-kai Warriors (S)	Level 8 Soldier
Medium shadow humanoid	XP 350 each
Initiative +11	**Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43	
AC 24; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	
Speed 5; see also *shadow jaunt*	
(+) **Katar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage (crit 1d6 + 9).	
Double Attack (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
The shadar-kai warrior makes two katar attacks.	
Cage of Gloom (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
The shadar-kai warrior makes a katar attack. If the attack hits, the shadar-kai warrior makes a secondary attack as strands of shadow coil around the target. **Secondary Attack:** +11 vs. Reflex; the target is restrained (save ends).	
Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**	
The shadar-kai warrior teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of its next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +15, Stealth +15	
Str 17 (+7)	**Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 14 (+6)	**Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 11 (+4)
Equipment shadowmail, 2 katars	

Development

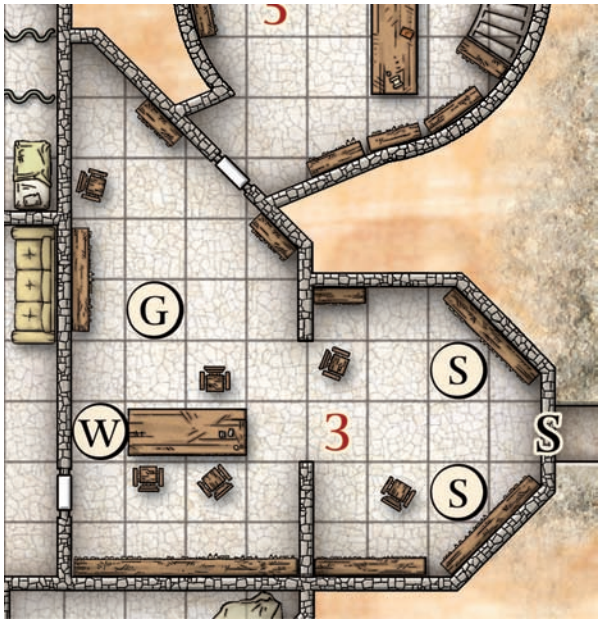
Combat in this area puts the gnolls in area 4 on alert for 5 minutes, though they do not come to investigate. No one is in the northeast tower, and the sound of combat cannot be heard on the level above.

If the PCs take a few minutes to examine the books the gloomblade was retrieving or the scrolls and books the witch was working with, they find confirmation of the dark research going on here. Sarshan's long-term plans involve breeding advanced races of warrior-slaves to be sold to the highest bidder.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Magic lanterns provide light to the area (dim throughout).

Bookshelves: These freestanding heavy wooden shelves stand 10 feet high and 4 feet wide, and they



are stacked with scrolls and leather-bound volumes. Standing bookshelves have no effect on movement. However, a creature can pull a shelf down as a minor action, which turns the 2 squares in front of the shelf into difficult terrain. A character standing in a square where a shelf falls is subject to an attack at +5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 damage and the target is stunned until the start of its next turn.

Table: The table is tall enough that a Small creature can move under it and gain cover (-2 penalty to attack rolls). It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up onto a table. A successful DC 10 Strength check allows a character to tip over a table, which then grants superior cover (-5 penalty to attack rolls).

Chairs: These are difficult terrain.

Great Hall

Encounter Level 5 (1,000 XP)

Setup

The shadar-kai chainfighters (both members of Sarshan's personal guard) are engaged in a heated argument with a dark haunter whose lord is reconsidering his allegiance to Sarshan. The dark haunter's mad wraith bodyguard floats nearby.

The creatures here are distracted while they argue. Unless the witch alerts them (see the Library tactical encounter), they do not hear combat in area 3.

2 shadar-kai chainfighters (C)
1 dark haunter (D)
1 mad wraith (W)

When the PCs can see into this area, read:

This chamber appears to be a great hall or gallery, with fine couches spaced along walls hung with dark tapestries. In the center of the ceiling is an opening 15 feet across, and dim light is visible from the floor above. The floor directly beneath the opening has tiles of a lighter shade of gray than the rest of the room.

On the far side of the chamber, two shadar-kai armed with spiked chains argue with an angry cloaked figure. At the creature's side, a spectral wraith shifts within a cloud of shadow, and the shadar-kai watch it carefully.

PCs who can eavesdrop (DC 10 Perception) make out that the discussion focuses on the dark one's liege lord reneging on a promise to grant Sarshan's mercenary forces access to a portal to the world within his territory.

When the creatures here see the PCs, read:

Suddenly you are spotted, and the shadar-kai lose all interest in their argument with the dark one as they shout a challenge and race toward you. The dark figure steps back as it appraises you, then orders the wraith forward with a command to attack.

2 Shadar-kai Chainfighters (C) **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 250 each

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 68; **Bloodied** 39
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17
Speed 6; see also *dance of death* and *shadow jaunt*

Spiked Chain (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 2d4 + 3 damage.

Dance of Death (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
The shadar-kai chainfighter shifts 6 squares and makes 3 spiked chain attacks at any points during his move. He can attack a given enemy only once, but he deals an extra 1d6 necrotic damage with each successful hit.

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The shadar-kai chainfighter teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of his next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +14, Stealth +14
Str 17 (+6) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment leather armor, spiked chain

Dark Haunter (D) **Level 6 Lurker**
Small shadow humanoid XP 250

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
HP 57; **Bloodied** 28; see also *killing dark*
AC 20 (see also *dark step*); **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19
Speed 6

Scimitar (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage (crit 1d8 + 11).

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +11 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

Dark Fog (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ✦ **Zone**
Area burst 4 within 10; creates a zone of darkness that blocks line of sight (creatures with darkvision ignore this effect).

Killing Dark (when reduced to 0 hit points)
Close burst 1; targets enemies; each target is blinded (save ends). When slain, a dark haunter explodes in a spout of darkness.

Combat Advantage
The dark haunter deals an extra 2d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Dark Step (move; at-will)
The dark haunter moves up to 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks, and gains combat advantage against any target that it ends its move adjacent to.

Invisibility (minor; recharge ⚁ ⚄ ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Illusion**
The dark haunter becomes invisible until the end of its next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +13, Thievery +13
Str 12 (+4) **Dex** 21 (+8) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 14 (+5) **Cha** 19 (+7)
Equipment black garments, scimitar, 4 daggers

Mad Wraith (W)	Level 6 Controller
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 250
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
Mad Whispers (**Psychic**) aura 3; deafened creatures are immune; any enemy in the aura at the start of its turn takes 5 psychic damage and is dazed until the start of its next turn. (If the mad wraith takes radiant damage, the aura is negated until the end of the mad wraith's next turn.)	
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant (see also **mad whispers** above)	
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing	
⊕ **Touch of Madness** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic** +8 vs. Will; 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will defense (save ends).	
⸸ **Touch of Chaos** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic** +9 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target moves up to its speed and makes a basic attack against its nearest ally as a free action.	
Spawn Wraith Any humanoid killed by a mad wraith rises as a free-willed mad wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the Raise Dead ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +13	
Str 6 (+1)	**Dex** 20 (+8) **Wis** 6 (+1)
Con 12 (+4)	**Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 19 (+7)

Tactics

The shadar-kai chainfighters use *dance of death* to weave through the PCs and attack poorly armored foes, then flank a single target with spiked chain attacks. The chainfighters do not coordinate attacks with either the dark haunter or the wraith. Both fight to the death.

The wraith targets the strongest-looking melee combatant with *touch of chaos*, then strikes the closest foes with *touch of madness* attacks. If the PCs have left any creatures in the library unconscious, the wraith enters that area in the third round and attacks with *touch of madness*, hoping to spawn additional mad wraiths.

The dark haunter uses *dark step* to target spellcasters and ranged combatants. If taken to 10 hit points or fewer, it flees south through the main doors and out of the tower, followed by the wraith (if it survives). Half the guards in the gatehouse follow the dark haunter, while the others (two warriors and two chainfighters) join the fight against the PCs.

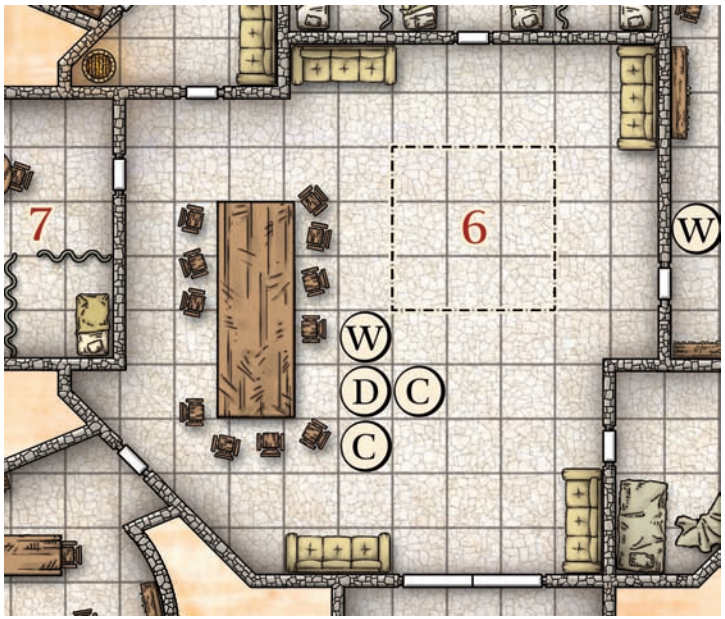
Features of the Area

Illumination: Magic lanterns provide light to the area (dim throughout).

Levitation Lift: The ceiling of this chamber features a 15-foot wide opening, and the floor beneath it is marked out in tiles of lighter gray. This magic lift allows creatures to reach the floor above. As a move action, a character can rise to the next level. Once on that level, the character moves up to 15 feet horizontally as a move action. As a minor action, a character in the air can shift 1 square horizontally.

Characters who stand within the area of lighter tiles feel unsteady on their feet and take a -2 penalty to their AC and Reflex defense. However, unless they mentally command the lift to carry them up, they can move through the area normally.

Table: The table is tall enough that a Small creature can move under it and gain cover (-2 penalty to attack rolls). It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up onto a table. A successful DC 17 Strength check allows a character to tip over the oversized table,



which then grants superior cover (-5 penalty to attack rolls).

Chairs: These are difficult terrain.

Couches: These elegantly upholstered couches provide cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up on a couch.

Fire Pit: This magic fire pit is difficult terrain. Any creature that enters the fire pit takes 1d8 + 5 fire damage.

Guest Quarters

Encounter Level 4 (900 XP)

Setup

A pack of gnoll mercenaries of the Wicked Fang page resides here, awaiting their next mission after selling their packs' services to Sarshan. Each gnoll wears a

symbol of a bloody, serrated fang in a prominent place on their armor. The gnolls go on alert for 5 minutes after any combat in area 3. They are otherwise distracted (and can be surprised if the PCs approach quietly).

2 gnoll huntmasters (H)
1 gnoll claw fighter (C)
1 gnoll marauder (M)

If the PCs listen at this door, read:

Growling voices can be heard from beyond the door. A yipping snarl punctuates them.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

This pair of adjoining rooms appears to be well-appointed guest chambers. Unfortunately, the present occupants seem ill-suited to their comforts. Four gnolls are here, and a reek of dog fills the air and the blankets on the beds pulled off and piled in the corners.

If the gnolls are not surprised, read:

The closest two snarl as they lunge at you with spear and claw, and the others prepare their longbows as they take cover behind a couch.

2 Gnoll Huntmasters (H) — **Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 200 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 14
Speed 7

⊕ **Handaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, or 1d6 + 5 damage while bloodied; see also **pack attack**.

↛ **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, or 1d10 + 6 damage while bloodied; see also **pack attack**.

Pack Attack
The gnoll huntmaster deals an extra 5 damage on melee and ranged attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the huntmaster's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +11
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 7 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows

Gnoll Marauder (M) — **Level 6 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 250

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 84; **Bloodied** 42
AC 18; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15
Speed 7

⊕ **Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, or 1d8 + 8 while bloodied; see also *quick bite* and *pack attack*.

↯ **Quick Bite** (free, when the gnoll marauder hits a bloodied enemy with a melee attack; at-will)
The gnoll marauder makes a bite attack against the same target: +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage, or 1d6 + 4 damage while bloodied.

Pack Attack
The gnoll marauder deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the marauder's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +10
Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 9 (+2) **Cha** 7 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, light shield, spear

Gnoll Claw Fighter (C) — **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid — XP 250

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35
AC 20; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15
Speed 8; see also *mobile melee attack*

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, or 1d6 + 6 while bloodied; see also *pack attack* below.

↯ **Clawing Charge** (standard; at-will)
The gnoll claw fighter charges and makes two claw attacks against a single target instead of one melee basic attack.

↯ **Mobile Melee Attack** (standard; at-will)
The gnoll claw fighter can move up to 4 squares and make one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The gnoll doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of its attack.

Pack Attack
The gnoll claw fighter deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the gnoll claw fighter's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +8
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 9 (+2) **Cha** 7 (+1)
Equipment leather armor

Tactics

The huntmasters shoot from behind the cover of the wall, falling back behind one of the beds if the PCs press them. They concentrate their fire on those characters engaged by the claw fighter and the marauder to deal extra damage with their *pack attack*.

The gnoll claw fighter uses its *mobile melee attack* against the weakest-looking PC, then moves into position with the marauder so the huntmasters gain their *pack attack* bonus. If the marauder falls, it switches to *clawing charge* attacks against the strongest melee combatants.

The gnoll marauder focuses its spear attacks against the weakest-looking PCs, hoping for a chance to use its *quick bite*.

Development

Among the gnolls' personal effects is a letter outlining their clans' proposed deal with Sarshan. It has only sketchy details of the assignment and terms, but Sarshan speaks of "a great need for troops ready to take advantage of unforeseen disaster."

Features of the Area

Illumination: Magic lanterns provide light to the area (dim throughout).

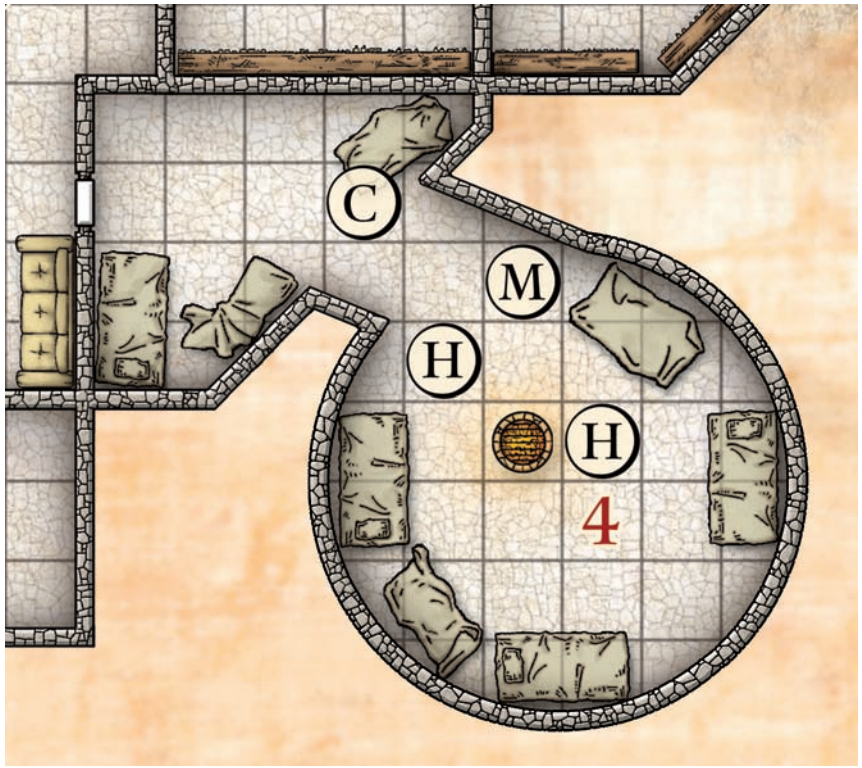
Beds: A bed provides cover (-2 penalty to attack rolls). It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up on a bed. A successful DC 15 Strength check allows a character to tip over a bed, which then grants superior cover (-5 penalty to attack rolls).

Table: The table is tall enough that a Small creature can move under it and gain cover (-2 penalty to attack rolls). It costs 2 squares of movement to hop up onto a table. A character can make a DC 10 Strength check to tip over a table, which then grants superior cover (-5 penalty to attack rolls).

Chairs: These are difficult terrain.

Blankets: The gnolls have piled blankets from the beds to create rough dens for themselves. These areas are difficult terrain.

Fire Pit: This magic fire pit is difficult terrain. Any creature that enters the fire pit takes 1d8 + 5 fire damage.



Garden of Shadows

Encounter Level 6 (1,250 XP)

Setup

This uninhabited garden poses no threat to shadow creatures. All others draw the unwelcome attention of the creatures that dwell here.

3 rot scarab swarms (R)
1 shadow beetle (B)

When the PCs enter this area, read:

Dim light from globes of gray glass casts faint shadows throughout a dark garden. Though the trees and other foliage here appear healthy and luxurious, the leaves, stems, and flowers of these plants are sickly shades of dark blue, gray, and black. Along the south wall of this chamber stands a stone arch identical to the teleportation portals you've seen before.

The rot scarab swarms and the shadow beetle are well hidden within the foliage (DC 20 Perception). If the PCs do not spot them, give the party a round or two to explore before the insects attack with surprise. Do not place their miniatures unless they are spotted or until they attack.

When the PCs see the lurking insects, read:

A hissing sound precedes a cloud of insects suddenly boiling up from the shadows, swarming to attack. At the same time, what appeared to be a mass of mottled leaves rises up to reveal itself as an enormous beetle, which has viscous black fluid dripping from its joints as it lurches toward you.

3 Rot Scarab Swarms (R) — **Level 8 Soldier**
Medium shadow beast (swarm) — XP 350 each

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
Swarm Attack aura 1; the rot scarab swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura.
HP 88; **Bloodied** 44
AC 22; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks
Speed 8, climb 8
(+) **Swarm of Mandibles** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+12 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 1 (-1) **Cha** 11 (+4)

Shadow Beetle (B) — **Level 5 Controller**
Large shadow beast — XP 200

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 62; **Bloodied** 31
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14
Speed 6
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.
Shadow Spray (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Close blast 3; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d6 damage, plus the target is immobilized and all creatures have concealment against it (save ends).
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 8 (+1)

The View From Above

If the PCs reach this area without going through the great hall (area 6, Great Hall tactical encounter), they can see and hear the argument between the shadar-kai and the dark haunter before the insects attack. When combat breaks out here, the shadar-kai ascend the lift to join in. The dark haunter sends the mad wraith up, but stays in area 6.

Tactics

The rot scarab swarms stay close together to catch as many foes as possible in the area of their *swarm attack* aura. They concentrate their *swarm of mandibles* attacks on the same targets, hoping to drop one foe before moving onto the next. The swarm cannot move through the area of the levitation lift.

The shadow beetle hits the strongest-looking melee or ranged combatants with its *shadow spray*, making bite attacks against lightly armored foes while it waits for that power to recharge. The beetle moves through the area of the levitation lift without making Acrobatics checks.

All these creatures fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Levitation Lift: The floor and ceiling of this chamber feature 15-foot wide openings. This magical lift allows creatures to reach the floors above or below. Characters in the area of the lift hover in midair until they mentally command the lift to move them. As a move action, a character can rise or descend one level, or can move up to 15 feet horizontally. As a minor action, a character can shift 1 square horizontally.

While within the lift (whether moving or not), a creature is unsteady, taking a -2 penalty to AC and Reflex defense.

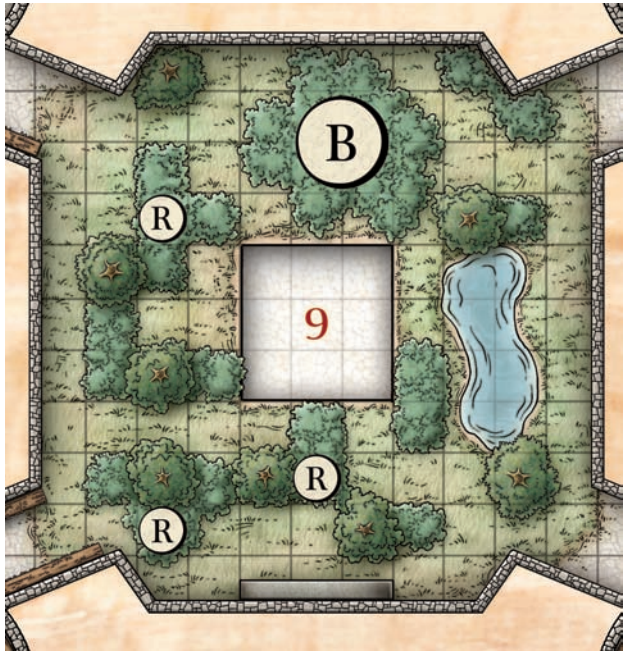
Creatures that move into the open area of the lift (as opposed to simply stepping into it) continue their movement through midair. A creature can travel across the open space of the lift by making a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check as part of the move action that takes it into the lift. On a result of 20 or higher, the creature gains 2 extra squares of movement. On a failed check, the creature loses momentum and slides

to the center of the lift (but can use another move action or a minor action to continue its move).

Trees: Squares containing trees are difficult terrain (requiring 1 extra square of movement to enter) and provide concealment (–2 penalty to attack rolls) to anyone standing in them. A tree's trunk provides cover (–2 penalty to attack rolls) to anyone standing adjacent to it.

Thickets: These areas of dense undergrowth provide concealment and are difficult terrain.

Stagnant Pool: This pool of dark water is only 2 feet deep at its center but is thick with black slime. A character who runs through the pool must make a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone. Characters can move at normal speed without difficulty.



Teleportation Portal: This black stone archway is a semicircle 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high, set against the stone wall of the chamber. Silver crystals are set within the stone in a random pattern. Runes in Common cover it, but their ancient dialect requires a successful DC 17 History check to decipher. They identify the arch as an ancient shadar-kai teleportation portal.

This arch functions as the arch in the black shrine (page 25). If it is touched, it reveals that area within it, but the PCs cannot pass through. The portal can normally be used by only Sarshan. See the Last Stand tactical encounter for more information.

Unexpected Parley

When the PCs have completed the last of the previous three encounters, they find their luck running out. Sarshan's guards, alerted by the combat in the tower, begin to close in. Do not allow the PCs a short rest in the aftermath of the previous encounter. If the party is not in area 10, modify the read aloud text accordingly.

As soon as the previous combat is done, read:

Before you can catch your breath, a sudden shout comes from below. Through the open floor, you see shadar-kai guards coming through the main doors.

Give the PCs time to strategize, then continue:

Six shadar-kai hit the levitation lift, and footsteps in the distance herald groups of four coming through the doors of each of the towers. The squad that comes up from below is led by a grizzled captain, who has ritual scars standing out on his cheeks. Two panthers move at his side with teeth bared as they hiss. "Stand down!" the captain shouts, "or your lives are forfeit!"

The shadar-kai captain is Thannu (see the Last Stand tactical encounter for his statistics). Though he means business, his inclination to slay the PCs outright is tempered by his knowledge that the absent Sarshan will want to question them first.

The PCs should hopefully recognize that this is a fight they cannot win, and that standing down is their best bet in the short term. However, if the party is more the fight-to-the-death crowd, allow them to strike back but have a pair of shadar-kai witches show up to immobilize them with magic.

Be careful not to be too heavy-handed with this scenario. This section of the adventure involves important revelations and decisions for the PCs. Allowing the players to feel like they're being railroaded is likely to undercut the importance of what they learn here.

The PCs are outnumbered to such a degree that Thannu does not bother taking their weapons or equipment. If the party is not in area 10, Thannu orders them to be taken up to the guards' quarters on the third level for questioning. Adjust the following read aloud text and use it when the PCs and their escorts are passing through the garden of shadows.

Once the PCs stand down, read:

Suddenly, the garden is illuminated by a pulse of white light. The archway to the south flares as it reveals the black shrine, and a familiar figure steps from that chamber to this. It's the veteran you spoke to in the Happy Beggar, but he is no longer stooped with the appearance of age and his scarred skin turns gray before your eyes.

The guards around you salute the shadar-kai, who doesn't hide his surprise at seeing you. He takes in the scene before him with a cold eye. "I am Sarshan. I assume someone has an explanation for this?"

Whatever the PCs' initial response, Thannu quickly interrupts to deliver a military-style report on the PCs' incursion of the tower, noting the areas they've infiltrated and the number of the dead and wounded. However, before he can finish, additional information arrives.

Even as the captain finishes, a warrior enters at a run, calling to his master. As he approaches to whisper in Sarshan's ear, the shadar-kai turns to you with a look of wonder.

"You are, quite literally, the last people I ever expected to see here. The charges leveled by my captain warrant torture and death. However, I am told that an episode of sabotage in my foundry appears to have been thwarted, and that the traitorous Modra has been executed by persons unknown. What might you know of this?"

If the PCs admit to the action in the foundry, Sarshan nods thoughtfully. If they are suspicious enough of Sarshan's motivations that they deny everything, assume that his Sense Motive automatically beats their Bluff.

"As far as you've managed to infiltrate my operations, I can only assume you know a little of who I am. My wealth and reputation turn largely on honor, obligation, and secrecy. When I spoke to you of Modra, I hoped you would kill him and save me the risk of more exposure than he had already caused. The fact that you journeyed here to do the job is a surprise, but for your part in ending his threat to me and whatever he meant to do in the foundry, I am in your debt. However, for your role in the death of my personal guards, you are more greatly in mine. Here is a bargain that balances the obligation for all of us. Join me."

Allow the PCs a chance to respond, then continue:

"Your skill at arms is clearly first rate. I offer you a place to use and advance that skill. Moreover, I offer you a place where you might live long enough to enjoy the fruits of your bravery. In a month, or six, or a year, your world will be a place you will not want to live. Join me here instead."

If the PCs attempt to question Sarshan on what he means, he equivocates.

"Though I am nicely positioned to take advantage of these things, I know relatively little yet. What I do know, I cannot share for professional reasons, but trust me when I say that you do not want to know. Name your choice, friends."

If the PCs refuse outright to join Sarshan, or if they attempt to kill time before making a decision, go to the Last Stand encounter.

The Easy Way Out

If the PCs decide to pretend to accept Sarshan's bargain as a means of avoiding combat with his elite troops, allow a single character speaking for the party to make a DC 21 Bluff check. Up to two other characters can aid the first. On a failed check, Sarshan tells the PCs they should leave lying to those more skilled at it. Go to the Last Stand tactical encounter.

If the check is successful, Sarshan accepts the PCs into his service. He orders Thannu to escort the party

to the guards' quarters on the third level, saying that he will have orders for them once they have rested.

How you play out the end of this scenario is up to you, but consider the following two options.

- Shortly after the PCs are taken to the guards' quarters, the larger tremor described in the Last Stand encounter rips through the tower. Thannu and his guards leave to investigate, allowing the PCs to slip back to the portal in the garden, then flee.
- Sarshan might be fooled by the PCs, but his captain isn't. Thannu waits until Sarshan is gone before ordering his troops to slay the party.

For either of these scenarios, adopt the Last Stand encounter accordingly, but you should end up with the PCs facing Thannu and his panthers in the garden while they try to activate the portal and escape.

Last Stand

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

The party has either rejected Sarshan's offer of employment outright, or the Shadar-kai has seen through their false consent. One way or the other, the PCs are prepared to meet their fate.

Thannu, elite shadar-kai warrior battle champion (T)
2 umbral panthers (P)

When Sarshan's offer falls through, read:

You feel a familiar shaking beneath your feet as another tremor rises and falls quickly. The shadar-kai's dark eyes blaze, but he smiles as he shakes his head. "Your conviction is to be commended. A pity it failed you in the end."

Then suddenly, an ear-splitting explosion shakes the tower. Near the eastern side of the chamber, one of Sarshan's guards shouts out: "My lord! The foundry is in flames!" The guards are in motion, Sarshan all but ignoring you as he barks orders. One group is sent to the foundry, and another receives orders to keep the mercenary camps under control. Sarshan takes a last squad of chainfighters with him as he moves for the lift. Thannu and his panthers are the only ones left with you.

"If I was as cruel as my reputation implies, I would send you back to watch your world die," Sarshan calls. "Be thankful that I am merciful." Then to Thannu: "Kill them."

Thannu, Shadar-kai Battle Champion (T) **Level 8 Elite Soldier**
Medium shadow humanoid XP 700

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 172; **Bloodied** 86
AC 26; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 19
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5; see also **shadow jaunt**
Action Points 1

⊕ **Katar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage (crit 1d6 + 11).

⚕ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Thannu makes two katar attacks.

⚕ **Cage of Gloom** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Thannu makes a katar attack. If the attack hits, he makes a secondary attack as strands of shadow coil around the target. **Secondary Attack:** +11 vs. Reflex; the target is restrained (save ends).

Battle Lord Tactics
Thannu and his allies deal an extra 1d6 damage against enemies that he flanks.

Battle Talent
Thannu can score critical hits on attack rolls of natural 19 and 20.

Inspiring Assault
Whenever he scores a critical hit, Thannu and all allies within 5 squares of him regain 4 hit points.

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Thannu teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of his next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +15, Stealth +15
Str 17 (+7) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 11 (+4)
Equipment shadowmail, 2 katars

2 Umbral Panthers (P) **Level 6 Lurker**
Medium shadow beast XP 250 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 76; **Bloodied** 38
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 17
Speed 7

⊕ **Claws** (standard; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.

⚕ **Tail Spike** (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves or shifts into a square adjacent to the umbral panther; at-will)
+11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage.

Combat Advantage
The umbral panther deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Invisibility (standard, usable only while in spectral form; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The umbral panther is invisible until it makes an attack. It can end this effect on its turn as a free action.

Spectral Form (standard; at-will)
The umbral panther becomes insubstantial. It gains a +5 power bonus to Stealth checks but deals only half damage with its attacks. It can end this effect on its turn as a free action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +13 (+18 in spectral form)
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+8) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 16 (+6) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 12 (+4)

Tactics

Thannu targets the most powerful-looking combatant with *cage of shadow*, then makes *double attacks* against the closest foes. He uses *shadow jaunt* to avoid the difficult terrain of the garden and reduce any damage from attacks made against him.

The umbral panthers flank with Thannu, dealing extra damage from their own combat advantage and his *battle lord tactics*. They stay close in combat, hoping that foes attacking the other panther trigger a *tail spike* attack. They give up an attack to use their *spectral form* only if bloodied, ending the effect before they attack the creature that bloodied them.

Thannu and his panthers have the utmost faith in their superiority over the PCs. They fight to the death.

Through the Arch

If the PCs activate the portal during combat (as opposed to dispensing with Thannu and his panthers first), the captain orders the panthers to pursue the party. He does not pass through the arch himself, believing that his cats can handle the PCs and sensing the gravity of the situation outside the tower.

Configuring the Portal

This skill challenge sees the PCs attempt to reconfigure Sarshan's teleportation portal to function for any creature, allowing them to escape the tower.

Configuring the Portal **Level 7**
Skill Challenge XP 300

Overlook, a fortified city on the eastern slopes of the Stonehome Mountains, is a bustling center of commerce and trade. Among its many people, you're sure to find more information about those who hunt you. Now you just need to figure out how you want to go about unearthing this information.

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, History, Perception, Thievery.

Victory: The portal is properly reconfigured to allow use by any creature. The PCs (and the umbral panthers) can step through it to be taken to the black shrine (area 1, page 25).

Failure: The PCs partially restore the portal's full function. Though any creature can now use it, the teleportation effect remains attuned to Sarshan, causing any other creatures stepping through the arch to lose one healing surge. Creatures that have no healing surges remaining (including the umbral panthers) lose hit points equal to their level.

Arcana DC 14 (2 successes). The PC detects magic to tap into the creature-specific configuration of the arch. On a failed check, arcane feedback deals 1d6 damage to the PC.

History DC 14 (2 successes; see Arcana). The PC studies the ancient runes inscribed on the arch, gleaning insight into its initial construction and its subsequent reconfiguration. On a result of 23 or higher, a PC also gains a +2 bonus to the next Arcana check made in the challenge.

Perception DC 14 (2 successes; see Thievery). The PC makes a close examination of the construction of the arch, seeing several points where the silver crystals set into the stone have been augmented with a kind of alchemical reagent. On a result of 23 or higher, a PC also gains a +2 bonus to the next Thievery check made in the challenge.

Thievery DC 14 (2 successes). The PC carefully reconfigures the pattern of crystals inset into the stone, altering the flow of arcane power within the archway.

Door Number One

It should be obvious to the PCs that the teleportation portal and the Shadowfell gate beyond it are their best hope for getting out of the tower and back to the world while avoiding the chaos outside. However, if the PCs ignore the arch (perhaps believing that the climax of the adventure is set to take place in the foundry), have another tremor collapse the gatehouse and the access to the foundry tunnel.

Likewise, if the PCs take out Thannu and his panthers, then decide to take their time looking around the tower once more, use additional aftershocks, incursions of new guards, or both to convince them to start moving.

The Getaway

Though the PCs might already have enough of a sense of Sarshan's threat to want to eliminate him, it is imperative that he escapes this encounter. The opportunistic shadar-kai arms dealer plays an even larger part in an upcoming episode of the adventure path. However, if the PCs make an honest effort to reach Sarshan, don't be too heavy-handed with them. Though his statistics are not provided here, you can let the party get in a couple of good shots before the shadar-kai's guards close in and allow him to limp away.

Development

Any PCs peering out the eastern windows can see the foundry being consumed by ongoing explosions of shadow and flame. Although Modra didn't complete his sabotage in a way that would destroy the tower, the foundry's systems have failed, releasing the arcane energy that fuels Sarshan's dark experiments.

From the south windows, chaos can be seen in the camps as mercenary bands try to pull back from the destruction. The pens of the slave bazaar have been broken open, and the slaves have overthrown their masters and started fleeing to the north.

If the PCs pass through the portal alone, go to the Shadows of Doom encounter on the next page. If the umbral panthers follow them, continue this encounter in the black shrine (area 1, page 25). Use the tactical map for the white shrine (White Shrine tactical encounter, page 21), rotated 90 degrees and altered as per the area description (page 15).

Features of the Area

Levitation Lift: The floor and ceiling of this chamber feature 15-foot wide openings. This magical lift allows creatures to reach the floors above or below. Characters in the area of the lift hover in midair until they mentally command the lift to move them. As a move action, a character can rise or descend one level, or can move up to 15 feet horizontally. As a minor action, a character can shift 1 square horizontally.

While within the lift (whether moving or not), a creature is unsteady, taking a –2 penalty to AC and Reflex defense.

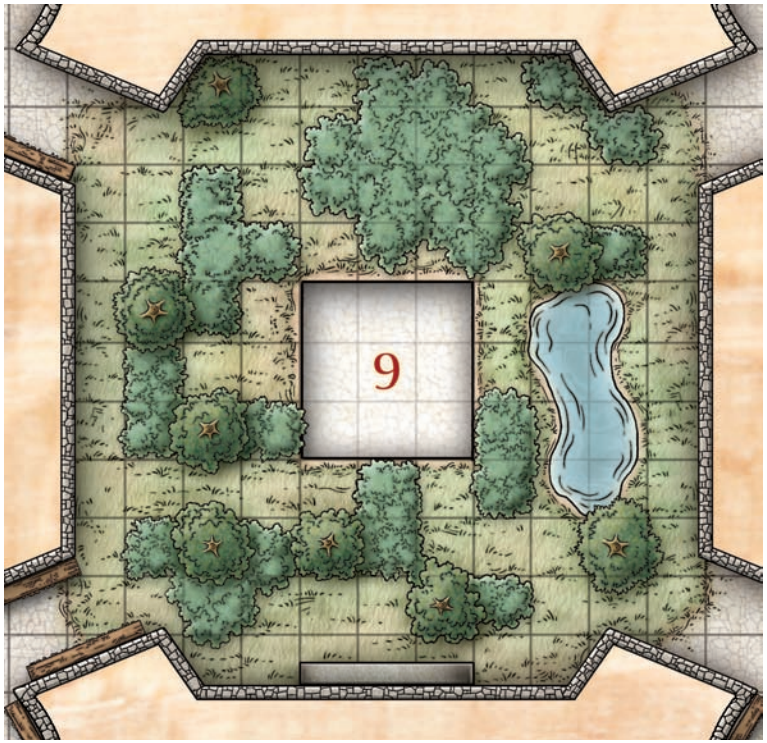
Creatures that move into the open area of the lift (as opposed to simply stepping into it) continue their movement through midair. A creature can travel across the open space of the lift by making a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check as part of the move action that takes it into the lift. On a result of 20 or higher, the creature gains 2 extra squares of movement. On a failed check, the creature loses momentum and slides to the center of the lift (but can use another move action or a minor action to continue its move).

Trees: Squares containing trees are difficult terrain (requiring 1 extra square of movement to enter) and provide concealment (–2 penalty to attack rolls) to anyone standing in them. A tree's trunk provides cover (–2 penalty to attack rolls) to anyone standing adjacent to it.

Thickets: These areas of dense undergrowth provide concealment and are difficult terrain.

Stagnant Pool: This pool of dark water is only 2 feet deep at its center but is thick with black slime. A character who runs through the pool must make a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone. Characters can move at normal speed without difficulty.

Teleportation Portal: This black stone archway is a semicircle 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high, set against the stone wall of the chamber. Silver crystals are set within the stone in a random pattern. Runes in Common cover it, but their ancient dialect requires a successful DC 17 History check to decipher. They identify the arch as an ancient shadar-kai teleportation portal.



This arch functions as the arch in the black shrine (page 25). If it is touched, it reveals that area within it, but the PCs cannot pass through. The portal can normally be used by only Sarshan. See the Last Stand tactical encounter for more information.

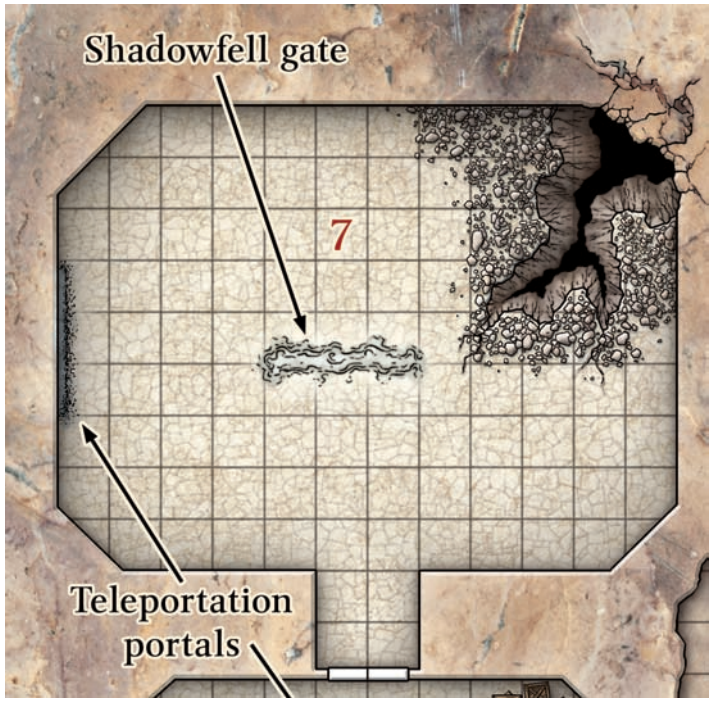
Shadows of Doom

Encounter Level 5 (875 XP)

Setup

The PCs pass through the teleportation portal from the tower and arrive back at the Shadowfell gate that can take them home. From the cavern entrance, they see the destruction of Umbraforge in the distance. The guards normally stationed here have returned to the tower, giving the PCs a chance to take a short rest if they wish to.

When the big tremor hits, the PCs are likely to flee at once. Interrupt or paraphrase the read aloud text according to their actions, but make sure the characters see the six specters emerge before they slip through the arch.



6 specters (S)

When the PCs have completed a short rest, or if they are intent on immediately activating the Shadowfell gate, read:

A skittering fall of rock down the rift gives a split-second's warning of another tremor, bigger this time. The cavern pitches around you—a crack like thunder echoing as the northern wall splits and heaves. And with a groan, the archway you just passed through crumbles and falls as a blast of arcane energy slams out across the chamber. Where it strikes the Shadowfell archway, a flare of black erupts from the stone, congealing into six humanoid forms.

It is most likely that the PCs will flee through the arch in the hope that the specters cannot follow. In that case, this encounter uses the tactical map and features of the white shrine (page 21), below.

If the PCs choose to play out the encounter entirely in the Shadowfell's black shrine before returning to the world, use the tactical map for the white shrine, rotated 90 degrees and altered as per the area description (page 21). When the PCs finally cross through to the world, have a tremor burn out the Shadowfell gate as they pass through it for the last time.

When the specters emerge through the arch in the white shrine, read:

The boiling field of shadow within the archway is suddenly rent by the five figures as they claw their way through it. With a shriek like shredding steel, the black mists within the Shadowfell gate are torn apart, the six specters seeming to absorb the darkness as it fades away.

The Shadowfell gate has just burned out and the six specters have consumed its power.

6 Specters (S)	Level 4 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 175 each
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
Spectral Chill (**Cold**) aura 1; enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to all defenses.	
HP 30; **Bloodied** 15	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing	
(+) **Spectral Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic** +7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 2 necrotic damage.	
✧ **Spectral Barrage** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Illusion**, **Psychic** Close burst 2; targets enemies; +7 vs. Will; 2d6 + 2 psychic damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Invisibility (standard; at-will) ✦ **Illusion** The specter becomes invisible until it attacks or until it is hit by an attack.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9	
Str 10 (+2)	**Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 8 (+1)
Con 13 (+3)	**Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 15 (+4)

Tactics

The specters attempt to keep the PCs in melee, maximizing the effect of their *spectral touch*. If a specter is targeted by more than one foe or by ranged attacks, it uses its turn to become invisible, using *spectral barrage*

against the maximum number of targets in the following round.

The specters fight until destroyed.

Expanding the Encounter

Feel free to take this encounter into the other areas of the secret caverns beneath the Happy Beggar. The specters pursue the PCs into any area if they attempt to flee and can even move into the almshouse or the streets around it if you wish. Have the specters drawn to the life force of the creatures in the city, which could put the PCs into a position to protect the innocent as they take on this final threat.

Features of the Area

Rubble: Where the northwest corner of the chamber has collapsed, it spreads into areas of loose scree that are difficult terrain. A character who runs through rubble must make a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone. Characters can move at normal speed without difficulty.

Larger rubble piles provide cover. The main rubble pile in the northwest corner provides superior cover.

Teleportation Portal: This black stone archway is a semicircle 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high, set against the stone wall of the chamber. Silver crystals are set within the stone in a random pattern. Runes in Common cover it, but their ancient dialect requires a successful DC 17 History check to decipher. They identify the arch as an ancient shadar-kai teleportation portal. Though it resembles the portal in area 6, this archway is inert.

Shadowfell Gate: This white stone archway is a semicircle 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high. The gate is nonfunctioning now that its magic has been drained by the specters.

Concluding the Adventure

In the aftermath of the final battle against the power of the Shadowfell, the PCs can take a well-deserved rest. The noise of the battle is heard in the Happy Beggar, with Prashant and Ausma discovering the secret cellar and the route the PCs took into the caverns below. They arrive just as the PCs are cleaning up and are astounded to discover what lies beneath their establishment.

The paladins take care of contacting the Overlook authorities. While they wait for the city guard to arrive, the PCs can confirm that the Shadowfell gate has been permanently destroyed. Sarshan's route into Overlook has been shut down for good.

With their religious background, Ausma and Prashant can give the PCs more information on the white shrine, since they recognize it as a place of ancient demon worship. They conclude that the dark power that created the specters has festered within both sides of the Shadowfell archway all this time—a potentially grave danger to Overlook that the PCs have eliminated. The teleportation portal is still operational, but it can be shut down by representatives of the Council.

The discovery and destruction of the Shadowfell gate makes the PCs heroes in Overlook, especially when Sarshan's connection to the recent orc raid is revealed. The shadar-kai's warehouses will be raided, but in the aftermath of Modra's treachery, Sarshan has been careful to clean up any evidence of his recent activities. Though his operations are shut down for good, no further information on the shadar-kai's presence in Overlook can be found.

The PCs have plenty of time to rest up and plan their subsequent moves. Little do they know, however, that their notoriety will take an unexpectedly dark turn in the next adventure. ⚔

About the Author

Scott Fitzgerald Gray (9th-level layabout, vindictive neutral) started gaming in high school and has worked as a writer and editor much of the time since then. After belatedly realizing he could combine both vocations in 2004, he's been making up for lost time as a freelance RPG editor and designer, primarily for Wizards of the Coast. He lives in the Canadian hinterland with a schoolteacher, two daughters, and a large number of animal companions.

PARAGON
11-20

Sea Reavers of the Shrouded Crags

by Logan Bonner

illustrations by Ryan Barger and Amir Salehi ✦ cartography by Sean Macdonald

A confederation of coastal states wants the PCs to infiltrate a group of seafaring raiders, and the PCs must choose which side to fight for.

"Sea Reavers of the Shrouded Crags" is a Dungeons & Dragons adventure for five characters of 15th level. It can take place in a coastal region in any game world.

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Adventure Background

Raids along a remote coastline have targeted an organization of cities called the Confederacy of Orodaum. The cities of the Sapphire Sea used to fare for themselves, but about one year ago, the leader of the city of Seryth Orodaum—Lord Felmorra—went missing. Gondra, one of Lord Felmorra's generals, warned the other cities that a treacherous ruler from the fog-shrouded north had abducted him. The cities banded together under Gondra's leadership, and he sent out troops and ships just as the raids began.

The raiders have been sinking military vessels and disrupting shipments at many of the settlements. Appearing out of nowhere, they surprise even the most experienced lookouts and see through all Gondra's attempts at espionage. The ruler of the confederacy seeks brave souls to travel into the fog-shrouded lands to find the raiders' hidden base.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs are recruited by Gondra, the ruler of a small confederacy of coastal settlements called Orodaum, to stop the raiders that have plagued their cities.

As a skill challenge, the PCs infiltrate the raiders and convince them to take on the PCs as allies. Brought inside a metal dwarven submersible, they travel underwater with the vessel's crew: a dwarf named Braran, a halfling named Mallum, and a half-elf named Prine, all of whom appear later in the adventure.

The vessel arrives at a dwarven city known as the Shrouded Crags, hidden in lands coated by perpetual fog. The PCs meet the ruler of the city, a dwarf named Morn, and encounter assassins who attempt to kill him. The PCs hear the first hints that Gondra might not be what he seems when Morn describes the reasons for the raids.

To prove their ability, Morn sends the PCs and Braran out in a submersible to find kuo-toa living under the sea. This leads to an optional skill challenge, an underwater encounter to remove hazards from the ship's path, and a fight in a kuo-toa lair. There, the PCs find prisoners—the former ruler of Orodaum, Lord Felmorra, along with his family and advisors.

The submersible meets up with Morn's Quarrel, the enormous flagship of the dwarven fleet. There, Felmorra reveals that Gondra allied with the kuo-toa so he could take control.

Soon afterward, Morn receives a message that the Shrouded Crags are under attack. Upon returning to the city, *Morn's Quarrel* is attacked, first by kuo-toa and piranhas attacking the rudders, then by water archons and kuo-toa shattering the windows of the vessel. Mallum and Prine board the ship, revealing themselves to be traitors as they attempt to take control of the vessel's weapons, intent on destroying the city. The PCs stop all attackers, but *Morn's Quarrel* is sinking. The PCs help rescue everyone on the ship during a skill challenge.

The Shrouded Crags are damaged and the dwarven fleet decimated. Morn and Lord Felmorra send the PCs to the capital of Orodaum to remove Gondra from power and capture him. The PCs can take an optional skill challenge to infiltrate the city without Gondra's knowing. Gondra's hall is well-defended, and two big encounters take place here. The first is against minotaur mercenaries and archer minions as the PCs first enter the building. The second is a battle in the throne room against Gondra, two nabassu gargoyles, and soldier minions.

One of the main plot threads of the adventure is discovering the truth about Gondra and his motivations, and the PCs find themselves on a different side of the fight than they expected at the beginning of the adventure. The adventure's theme is a combination of exploration, swashbuckling adventure, and intrigue—think Robin Hood meets *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs are more likely to take on Gondra's mission if they have a bigger stake in the proceedings. An NPC ally might be lost in the foggy lands where the adventure takes place. The PCs could be in trouble, needing to take on the job as a way to avoid punishment or danger. A mysterious attack might harm friends of the PCs (and you can reveal later that the attack was actually by kuo-toa, not the dwarves).

Orodaum

The PCs travel to the capital of the Confederacy of Orodaum, a state formed of a number of cities along the coast of the Sapphire Sea. Known as Seryth Orodaum, the capital isn't particularly large, but it is more extravagant than most cities in the same region.

Gondra, leader of the confederacy, has been looking for a small group that can infiltrate an enemy's forces. The PCs might have heard about the job from an ally, or Gondra might seek them out specifically if they can be contacted easily. Either way, they travel to Gondra's Hall to learn the details of the assignment.

01. An Audience with Gondra

Upon arriving, the PCs are ushered to Gondra's throne room after a short wait. Read or paraphrase the following:

Gondra's Hall is a large building that looks like a cross between a mansion and a fortress—both opulent and forbidding. The windows of his throne room are barred, and the walls are thick. Gondra waits, sitting on a throne upon a raised stage. Rising when you approach, he begins to speak:

"Greetings. I hope you're enjoying our fair city. If you don't mind, I'd like to get to the point."

Show them Gondra's portrait on this page.

Gondra explains that raiders have been attacking by sea, sinking ships belonging to Orodaum's military and destroying cargo. The raiders' strange metallic vessels have appeared out of nowhere, and even the most skilled lookouts and spies have been unable to anticipate when they'll attack.

Gondra wants the PCs to infiltrate the group making the attacks and discover their location and plans. He suspects the attacks are coming from the fog-shrouded lands to the northwest, known to be notoriously dangerous to navigate. He stresses that finding out the group's future plans is of utmost importance: The PCs are free to help the raiders to earn their trust, as long as their actions prevent future raids. Finally, Gondra wants to know the location of the enemies' base.

If the PCs accept the task, Gondra will pay them 16,000 gp, with 4,000 in advance. This also begins a quest:

Infiltrate the Raiders (15th-level major quest, 6,000 XP): If the PCs infiltrate the group that has been raiding Orodaum and give Gondra enough information to stop the raids, they complete this quest.

If the PCs accept, Gondra tells them the details of the plan. They will pose as sympathizers to the raiders' cause, pretending to assist in the assault to join up with the raiders. Gondra sends the PCs to one of the cities of the Confederacy of Orodaum. He thinks Sabronport, Pellen, and Kapram are the most likely targets for an attack, and the PCs can go to any one of these locations.

Sabronport lies to the west, at the edge of the fog-shrouded peninsulas to the north.

Pellen is between Seryth Orodaum and Sabronport, and is a major trading hub.

Kapram is the southernmost city of Orodaum, and is the smallest city of the Confederacy.

Regardless of where the PCs choose to wait for an attack, Gondra sends a few small ships every night to try to draw the raiders out. While waiting, the PCs learn some of the history of Orodaum. All the information listed under Adventure Background is common knowledge, so the PCs might overhear it or learn it during casual conversation with the locals. (You might share this information during minor social encounters to set the tone of the adventure, but you could just as easily provide it as simple exposition.)

02. Raiders Strike!

The attack comes after a few days. Since the PCs are only pretending to fight, this conflict is modeled as a skill challenge.

Conning the Raiders	Level 15
Skill Challenge	XP 4,800

As the night falls, you hear alarm bells sounding and shouts coming from the docks. When you reach the docks, you see half a dozen pill-shaped metal vessels without sails firing green bolts of lightning at the Orodaum ships. You can see a few people—they look like dwarves—climbing out of the metal ships.

A cluster of guards rushes out to the docks—the troops you're meant to pretend to fight.

The PCs need to convince the raiders that they're on the same side by pretending to fight the Orodaum troops and by guessing the dwarves' motivation.

Complexity 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight.

Other Skills History, Intimidate.

Victory If the PCs succeed on the skill challenge, they are taken aboard, but the dwarves still don't trust them or truly regard them as allies. If the PCs beat the skill challenge without any failures, the dwarves are glad to bring them aboard, greeting them warmly.

Defeat If the PCs fail at the skill challenge, they are taken as prisoners.

Acrobatics DC 22 (1 success, no maximum successes). False attacks and dodges look more impressive when the PC includes acrobatic flourishes.

Arcana DC 22 (0 successes, but grants a +2 bonus to the next Diplomacy check). The PC notes that whoever crafted these vessels must have been a master of magic.

Arcana (advanced) DC 23 (1 success, no maximum successes). This can only be used by a spellcaster. By manipulating spells, the PC can keep from harming their "foes," but still have the spells look deadly.

Athletics DC 18 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC makes false attacks look more brutal and visceral.

Bluff DC 22 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC pretends to be truly angry at the Orodaum troops, and convinces the raiders that they're on the same side.

Diplomacy DC 25 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC entreats the raiders to accept the PCs into their group. This type of check gains a bonus equal to the number of successes the PCs have already accrued (from any source). When a PC attempts a Diplomacy check, let the players know that future checks will be easier if they've taken other actions to impress the dwarf raiders.

History DC 26 (0 successes, but grants a +2 bonus to all further Acrobatics, Athletics, and Bluff checks). Knowing that the raiders are dwarves, the PC recalls some dwarven fighting styles.

Insight DC 20 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC notices that the raiders are causing a lot of damage, but aren't killing people. The PC can gain a success by yelling out for the other PCs not to kill their "enemies."

Intimidate DC 26 (0 successes, but grants a +2 bonus to the next Acrobatics, Athletics, or Bluff check). The PC can lend credibility to their attacks by genuinely scaring the Orodaum troops.

Development

After the skill challenge, the PCs are brought on board one of the dwarven submersibles. Its captain is Braran, a gruff, white-haired male dwarf with an eye patch. With him are two allies: a grinning female halfling named Mallum, who carries daggers and wears leather armor; and a snooty male half-elf named Prine who carries an arcanist's staff.

Show the players the picture of Mallum and Prine on page 71.

The vessel the PCs ride in is the size of the small vessel shown on the map on page 68, and they're packed in tight with Braran and his two allies. As the ships set out to return to their base, read:

Mallum, the female halfling, pulls a hatch on the top of the vessel closed and twists a metal handle, sealing it shut. Then, the vessel surges forward and down, plunging beneath the surface of the sea. You feel pressure in your ears as the metal contraption dives deeper and deeper. This seems routine to the others, as they laugh about their victory and sing in Dwarven. After a time, Prine speaks a command word, causing a bright light to burst from outside the ship. You can see it pierce the dark waters, illuminating vast outcroppings of rock under the waves.

The vessel travels underwater for hours at a stretch, surfacing for only a few minutes at a time before diving again. Although they move very quickly, it will still take two days to reach their destination. Over this time, the PCs have a chance to speak with the others and learn more about them:

- They won't go into much detail about why they're conducting these raids, saying, "We'll let Morn tell you about that."
- It's clear they don't care for the Confederacy of

Orodaum, or at least not its military. They refer to Gondra as a "usurper," and to his troops as "Gondra's swine."

- ✦ They mention that Morn has an enormous submersible of his own. With its enormous tail rudders and the ramming plate at the front, it looks like a crossbow bolt—hence its name, *Morn's Quarrel*.

Underwater, it's very difficult for the PCs to find their bearings, and they don't surface for long enough to reveal any significant information about their location. A DC 30 Nature check lets a PC know they've gone to the northwest of Orodaum, but it's impossible for someone who isn't trained in navigating below these waters to know more than that.

Dwarven Submersibles

The vessels used in this adventure—an average dwarven submersible (such as the *Iron Keg*) and the enormous flagship *Morn's Quarrel*—are described here using the vehicle rules from *Adventurer's Vault* (pages 14–20).

The Shrouded Crags

The submergible surfaces as it nears its destination. Fog envelops the ship, making it difficult to see anything. Read or paraphrase the following:

The vessel keeps moving straight ahead, and you soon see the other vessels from the raid surface behind you. Finally, the fog breaks and sunlight fills the sky.

Ahead of you is an immense white cliff. Carved into it are hundreds of archways, staircases, columns, and windows. This immense dwarf city is bustling with activity. Your vessel pulls into a dock at the base of the cliff.

Show the players the illustration of the Shrouded Crags on this page.

S1. Meeting Morn

As Braran, Mallum, Prine, and the PCs exit their vessel, a dwarf in a breastplate and velvet robe walks down the dock toward them. As he approaches, the other crew members kneel and Braran shouts, "Hail Morn!"

Show the players the portrait of Morn on this page and read:

Morn approaches, walking with his head held high. He shouts, "You seem in good spirits, brave friends! I look forward to hearing how we won the day yet again. But first, tell me about these newcomers you've brought here to the Shrouded Crags."

The others explain how the PCs want to join the cause (or more likely, the PCs will interrupt at this point and tell him themselves). Either way, they tell Morn their opinion of the PCs' motives, depending

on the results of the skill challenge in O2: The PCs are a suspicious lot (if the PCs failed), they seem to be genuine (if they succeeded normally), or they're trustworthy and highly skilled (if they succeeded with no failures).

Morn summons the PCs to his throne room. If they're prisoners (because of a failed skill challenge), he has their wrists bound and assigns a soldier to accompany them.

S2. Assassins Strike

As they travel to the throne room, they travel a series of winding corridors and up many sets of stairs. They pass through enormous, lofty halls that serve as gathering places, and vast dwellings where extended families live. As they walk, Morn tells them that he

Morn's Quarrel
Gargantuan vehicle

HP 800 **Space** 6 squares by 30 squares **Cost**—
AC 5; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 2
Speed swim 6

Pilots
Morn's Quarrel requires two pilots in the propulsion/control room to operate the massive rudders.

Crew
At least two additional crew are needed to watch ahead from the observation room and communicate bearing to the propulsion/control room. The ship's captain interprets the lookouts' information and relays commands to the pilots. Without information from the lookouts, the submersible goes out of control. Navigation requires a standard action each round from each crew member.

Load
Fifty Medium creatures; 5 tons of cargo.

Out of Control
When out-of-control, *Morn's Quarrel* continues moving in the same direction, but its speed decreases by 1 at the start of each of its turns. If it goes out of control because its rudders are destroyed, but the propulsion orbs are still intact, the vessel doesn't slow down, but can't turn.

Weapons
There are powerful weapons in the front of the ship: two ballistae and a lightning cannon.

Ballistae: Each ballista requires three actions two operate: 1 standard action to load, 1 standard action to aim, and 1 standard action to fire. These actions can be taken by multiple people. A ballista can only be fired once per round.

Lightning Cannon: The lightning cannon requires two crew members trained in Arcana. Each must stand next to a lightning orb and spend a standard action. The cannon can be fired every other round.

Heavy Ballista (3 actions, see description; at-will, once per round)
Ranged 25/50; +14 vs. AC; 5d6 damage. The character aiming the ballista adds half his or her level as a bonus to the ballista's attack rolls.

Lightning Cannon (2 actions, see description; at-will, every 2 rounds)
Area burst 4 within 40; +14 vs. Reflex; 4d12 lightning damage. *Miss:* Half damage. The character with the lowest Arcana modifier adds his or her Arcana modifier as a bonus to the lightning cannon's attack rolls.

Reinforced
Morn's Quarrel is reinforced for ramming attacks. When the vessel rams a target, halve the damage to *Morn's Quarrel* and creatures on board the vessel.

Sealed
Creatures inside *Morn's Quarrel* cannot gain line of effect to those outside (and vice versa), though they might have line of sight to each other through windows.

Submersible
Morn's Quarrel can travel underwater. It holds enough air to support fifty creatures for 24 hours. Its air supply recharges after five minutes on the surface.

Dwarven Submersible
Huge vehicle

HP 300 **Space** 2 squares by 4 squares **Cost** 65,000 gp
AC 5; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 2
Speed swim 8

Pilots
A dwarven submersible requires one pilot to operate the rudders.

Crew
At least one additional crew member is needed to watch ahead and communicate bearing to the pilot. Without information from a lookout, the submersible goes out of control. Navigation requires a standard action each round.

Load
12 Medium creatures; 500 pounds of gear.

Out of Control
An out-of-control dwarven submersible comes to a stop at the beginning of its turn. As the DM's discretion, it might move 1 square in the direction of a strong current.

Light Ballista (standard action; at-will)
Ranged 20/40; +13 vs. AC; 4d6 damage. The character aiming the ballista adds half his or her level as a bonus to the ballista's attack rolls. The ballista requires a standard action to load.

Sealed
Creatures inside a dwarven submersible cannot gain line of effect to those outside (and vice versa), though they have line of sight to each other through portholes.

Submersible
A dwarven submersible can travel underwater. It holds enough air to support twelve creatures for six hours. Its air supply recharges after five minutes on the surface.

SUBMERSIBLE SPEED

Vehicle	Speed	/Hour	/Day
Dwarven submersible	8	4 miles	96 miles
Morn's Quarrel	6	3 miles	72 miles

has become cautious of newcomers lately, and that he wants to make sure that anyone who seeks to join him is as noble as the soldiers who make up his raiding parties.

When the PCs approach the throne room, read:

You enter an ornate hall—the court of Morn—and continue into his throne room beyond. The furnishings are decorated with exotic gems and stone, some of which looks like they were gathered from the seafloor. A throne made of crystal and filled with slate-gray sand sits on a raised dais. Behind it is a row of columns, and between them you can see the sky outside.

As Morn approaches his throne, assassins leap from the shadows to kill him.

Tactical Encounter: "Assassins Strike" (page 62).

Development

Morn says that the assassins were probably sent by Gondra, who has been hiring independent assassins. As far as the dwarves know, none had escaped to tell Gondra where the Shrouded Crags are.

Morn then talks to the PCs, explaining why the raids have been taking place. Here are some details:

- About a year ago, the ruler of Orodaum, Lord Felmorra, disappeared and Gondra seized control. Morn suspects that Gondra was behind the disappearance.
- There had been an agreement between the Shrouded Crags and Orodaum, and a mutual respect. Morn doesn't believe Gondra is an altruistic ruler, and thinks he tricked the cities of the area into joining his Confederacy so he can gain more power.
- The raids are meant to show that Gondra is weak, and to turn the people against him.
- Creatures of the deep have long plagued the seas and coasts of this land, and the dwarves agreed to fight them if the humans would provide them with supplies. Lord Felmorra honored this deal, but Gondra does not. The warriors of the crags still fight the creatures, and Morn sees raiding the Orodaum ships as enforcing their end of the bargain.
- Gondra absolutely knows who Morn is and why he's attacking, and if Gondra says otherwise, he's lying.

Morn says he'll let the PCs have some time to think about whether they want to join him. He gives them a place to stay, but regrets that he must post guards just in case.

Assassins Strike

Encounter Level 15 (5,600 XP)

Setup

When Morn moves to take his seat in his throne, assassins leave their hiding places and attempt to slay him.

If the PCs were taken prisoner after the skill challenge in O2, they begin the encounter with their wrists lightly bound. Escaping from these minimal bindings requires only a standard action.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

2 human blademasters (A)
2 human snipers (S)

Perception Check
DC 29 *You hear a noise that lets you know there are people hiding somewhere in this room, but despite catching the occasional glimpse of movement, it's hard to pinpoint where they are.*

DC 34 Pinpoint the location of the nearest two assassins to the player.

If none of the PCs succeeds on the Perception check, the assassins have a surprise round.

If the PCs were taken prisoner after the skill challenge in O2, read:

You hear the sound of a crossbow bolt in flight and a sickening SCHUNK as it hits the dwarf soldier sent to guard you. He drops to the ground as two assassins with swords begin to move toward Morn. They are clearly not alone.

If the PCs succeeded at the skill challenge in O2, read:

As Morn approaches his throne, two human assassins appear, each wearing a dark cloak and brandishing two short swords. Morn shouts for help and adopts a defensive stance, but he is unarmed and outnumbered.

Morn

The assassins are here to eliminate Morn. Since he's not carrying a weapon, Morn acts to defend himself.

Why Stop the Assassins?

The PCs might decide that Gondra would be perfectly happy if his enemy were assassinated. If they choose to let the assassins win, or to help kill Morn, here are some possible repercussions you might remind them about:

- ✦ The assassins don't look friendly, and they will attack the PCs if they escape from their bindings or otherwise interfere.
- ✦ Gondra wants to know the group's specific plans, and there's no guarantee that Morn's death will stop the raids. He also gave the PCs permission to help the raiders to gain their trust.
- ✦ If Morn dies, the PCs will have to deal with a city full of angry dwarves.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light from multiple candles in wall sconces, but dim Light in the curtained room.

Curtain: It costs 1 additional square of movement to move through a curtain. The curtain blocks line of sight, but an adjacent creature can pull aside the curtain with a minor action and attack through it until the end of the turn.

Braziers: A character can knock over a coal-filled brazier (a standard action), and make a Strength attack against a creature adjacent to the brazier. A creature hit by a tipped-over brazier, or one that moves into the brazier's square takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Colonnade: A series of columns set close together make up the wall behind the throne. A character can squeeze to move through, or go through normally with a DC 20 Acrobatics check.

Water: A character who jumps off the balcony will land in the sea below. It's a 60-foot drop, but the water cushions the impact, so the fall deals 4d10 damage.

Treasure: Each assassin carries 2,250 gp worth of gems, their pay for this assassination. The PCs are free to take it.

Tactics

The assassins all attack Morn in the first round (or in the surprise round), but they will switch their focus to any PCs that escape their bindings.

The snipers keep cover and fire on enemies occupied by the blademasters. If trapped, they fight with their bayonets, but try to avoid that if possible.

Early in the fight, the blademasters use their smoke bombs, and then spend action points to attack blinded foes. The blademasters use Stealth to hide in the smoke created by their smoke bombs, then use dual attack and shift to keep the PCs guessing where they are. After being blooded, the blademasters retreat, trying to reach the balcony outside the throne room. The round after they reach the balcony, they jump off into the fog-shrouded sea below.

Conclusion

The encounter ends when all the assassins either die or escape by diving off the balcony. If any are captured alive and questioned, they will admit to being sent by Gondra, but Morn has already deduced this. They operate independently, so they have no information about any other plans Gondra might have made.

2 Human Snipers (S) **Level 15 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,200 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +17
HP 111; **Bloodied** 55
AC 27; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 27
Speed 6

Bayonet (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+20 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage.

Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage

Bleeding Bolt (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends). *Aftereffect:* Weakened until the end of the sniper's next turn.

Acrid Bolt (standard; encounter) ✦ **Acid, Weapon**
Area burst 1 within 15; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 3 acid damage.

Sharp Eye
When making a ranged attack, the human sniper ignores concealment (but not total concealment).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +19
Str 12 (+8) **Dex** 25 (+14) **Wis** 20 (+12)
Con 15 (+9) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 14 (+9)
Equipment cloak, crossbow, poison bolts (see below)

2 Human Blademasters (A) **Level 13 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,600 each

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 256; **Bloodied** 128
AC 29; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 24
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage.

Dual Attack (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The blademaster makes two melee basic attacks, and can shift 1 before, between, or after the attacks.

Secret Poison (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Poison**
+18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Smoke Bomb (standard; encounter)
Area burst 1 within 5; +17 vs. Fortitude; blinded until the end of the blademaster's next turn. Squares in the area are lightly obscured until the end of the encounter.

Secret Stride
The blademaster takes no penalties to Stealth for moving up to its speed.

Combat Advantage
The blademaster's melee attacks deal an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +15, Stealth +18
Str 19 (+10) **Dex** 24 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 13 (+7) **Cha** 14 (+8)
Equipment leather armor, cloak, 5 daggers, 2 short swords, smoke bomb

Kuo-toa Lair

The following day, Morn summons the PCs to his throne room again. He thanks the PCs for their help and asks if they still want to join Morn's cause. If they say yes, read or paraphrase the following:

Morn smiles. "Coming to my defense shows that you are honorable," he says, "and there is only one rite of passage for all outsiders who wish to join our ranks. Before you join the raids on Orodaum, you must brave the dangers of the depths.

"We are soon setting out on an expedition to clear out some kuo-toa that infest nearby waters. I ask that you join Braran, the captain who brought you here, during this mission. I want my dwarven kinfolk to see you as one of their own."

This begins a quest:

Defeat the Kuo-toa (15th-level minor quest, 1,400 XP): Travel to the hidden lair of a group of kuo-toa, defeat them, and collect the spoils.

K1. Finding the Lair

As the PCs set out, read the following:

You join Braran and Keldan—a young but experienced dwarf raider—on board one of the small submersibles. There isn't much room to move around, and the air inside is hot, stifling, and a bit gamy. The metal vessel has many portholes in its sides, and there's a spyglass for peering out into the waters. A light ballista sits at the front of the ship, and there's a hatch it can fire through. Big winches at the back of the ship control the rudders.

Adding Encounters

This section of the adventure is a good place to add encounters if you want to extend the adventure. Additional kuo-toa lairs or underwater fights against traveling kuo-toa can fit in well here.

The submersible is called the *Iron Keg*, and is Braran's favorite vessel.

If the PCs want to help the dwarves find the lair, use the skill challenge provided. If they're not interested, skip ahead.

Finding the Lair	**Level 15**
Skill Challenge (optional)	XP 1,200 XP

Finding the kuo-toa lair requires a team effort, evaluating maps to plot out likely locations, piloting the submersible beneath the surface, and keeping an eye out for signs of habitation as the ship crisscrosses the ocean floor.

The PCs and dwarves set out to find an underwater kuo-toa lair, using keen observation and known information about kuo-toa to find likely locations to search.

Complexity 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills Athletics, History, Nature, Perception, Religion.

Other Skills Arcana, Dungeoneering.

Victory If successful, finding the kuo-toa lair takes 1 day plus 1 day per failed check in the challenge.

Defeat If the PCs didn't help or failed the skill challenge, finding the lair takes 4 days.

Arcana DC 22 (0 successes, but grants a +2 bonus to all further Nature and Perception checks). The PC knows the types of materials used in kuo-toa rituals, and tells the others to look for places where those minerals and plants can be found.

Athletics DC 18 (0 successes, but grants a +2 bonus to the next Perception check). The PC steers the vessel, freeing another crew member to help with scouting.

Dungeoneering DC 22 (0 successes, but grants a +2 bonus to all further Nature and Perception checks). The PC remembers that kuo-toa lairs are usually found in the Underdark, and that they like murky subterranean water.

History DC 22 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC recalls the locations of some of the kuo-toa attacks and helps narrow down their location.

Nature DC 22 (1 success, no maximum successes). By observing the underwater currents and looking at maps, the PC figures out some likely places where underwater caverns might exist.

Perception DC 22 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC sees evidence that kuo-toa were here, and can guess the direction they might have gone.

Religion DC 26 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC recalls strictures of the kuo-toa that limit the number of places they can live based on ancient religious doctrine.

K2. The Lair's Defenses

As the *Iron Keg* nears the kuo-toa lair, it comes into a narrow corridor. Read:

The dwarven submersible slows to a stop at the mouth of a narrow cave. The light from the vessel illuminates swirling water and jagged stones inside.

Braran says, "Look at that—no way we can pass through there. Do you all think you can take a look about and make that passage safe enough?"

The submersible holds back so the PCs can clear out dangerous obstacles. The dwarves can provide potions that allow the PCs to breathe water for 5 minutes. They only have a few such potions—enough for the PCs and maybe one or two more—and they warn the PCs that they don't have much time.

Tactical Encounter: "The Lair's Defenses" (page 66).

K3. Kuo-toa Lair

The ship inches through the passage once the hazards are cleared. When the lookout spots a glowing cave entrance in the distance, the Braran dims the light gems on the outside of the ship and accelerates, intent on breaching the entrance.

Tactical Encounter: "Kuo-toa Lair" (page 68).

Development

The PCs free Lord Felmorra and the other captives from the previous court of Orodaum. Though it stretches the *Iron Keg*'s facilities to the limit, Braran is able to cram everyone into the ship long for the short (but very cramped) trip back to the Shrouded Crags.

While en route, Braran uses a ritual to contact Morn to inform him of their unexpected guests. *Morn's Quarrel* leaves the crags to meet up with the *Iron Keg*.

Morn's Quarrel

When the *Morn's Quarrel* arrives the next day, read or paraphrase the following:

You see an enormous shadowy shape in the distance, with searching beams of light coming out from it. As it approaches, you see that its silhouette resembles an enormous crossbow bolt, vividly showing how Morn's Quarrel got its name. As it comes full into view, you see intricate designs decorating the hull and huge windows that surround a fine, well-lit state room near the front of the vessel. The prow is sheathed in iron, clearly built for ramming other ships. Propulsion crystals glow a vibrant green, pushing the behemoth through the water.

Show the players the illustration on this page.

After the ships surface, Felmorra's entourage moves onto *Morn's Quarrel*, and the PCs are asked to join them. Felmorra, still weak, reclines on a couch in the stateroom and speaks with Morn and the PCs as the ship travels back to the crags. Read the following:

In a voice still hoarse from his ordeal, Felmorra says, "I had come to think I'd never see the light of the sun again. The dwarves of the crags never cease to amaze me. You truly are Seryth Orodaum's greatest allies. Tell me, what has happened since I was last free?"

As the two discuss the last year, the PCs learn:

- The kuo-toa are allied with Gondra, and they helped him capture Felmorra and the other prisoners.
- Gondra visited Felmorra from time to time to press for information about the secrets of Seryth Orodaum. Felmorra gave up far more than he would have wished on many topics, but never revealed the location of the Shrouded Crags.
- Gondra has many agents trying to find the location of the Shrouded Crags and to help destroy it. They all function independently, unaware of one another's activities.
- Lord Felmorra was always unsure whether Gondra's motives were pure, but the man rose to power because of his skill in battle.

A Fork in the Road

The PCs have an important choice to make. Do they continue working for Gondra, or do they switch sides? If they decide to switch sides at any point during the rest of the adventure, they lose their major quest for Gondra (page 56) and gain a new one:

Depose Gondra (16th-level major quest, 7,000 XP): The PCs must defeat Gondra's troops and remove him from power in Orodaum.

The Lair's Defenses

Encounter Level 14 (5,200 XP)

Setup

The PCs and the *Iron Keg* arrive on the north side of the map. Unless the PCs clear the way, the *Iron Keg* can't fit through this area.

This encounter includes the following creatures, traps, and hazards. Two kuo-toa harpooner guards lie in wait and join the fight later.

2 kuo-toa harpooners (K)
underwater vortexes (blue swirls)
2 rock flingers (brown rocks; the red squares represent trigger areas)

When the PCs enter the area, read:

This narrow underwater tunnel is surrounded on all sides by jagged, dangerous rocks. Rocky walls separate the cavern into many smaller areas. In several places, the water swirls, forming a funnel.

Perception Check
DC 25 *There's a vent in the rocky surface below the swirling vortexes.*
DC 27 *In a few secluded areas, you can see clusters of rocks that look like they were placed there purposefully.*
DC 31 *There are scratches along the walls near the clusters of rocks, like dense objects moved rapidly past and scraped chunks off the walls.*

Arcana Check
DC 27 *You notice two magical zones in the water.* Show the player the trigger zones for the rock traps.

Dungeoneering or Nature Check
DC 20 *This vortex is probably created by a vent that can be redirected or plugged.* This character gains a +2 bonus to Athletics and Thievery countermeasures against all vortexes until the end of the encounter.

Underwater Vortexes

These vortexes could batter the submersible against the walls, possibly rupturing its hull. The swirling waters can suck creatures into them or expel them.

When the vortex activates, read:

The swirling water tugs you chaotically as you struggle against its force.

Underwater Vortexes	**Level 13 Obstacle**
Hazard	XP 800

Hazard: Four locations are filled with swirling waters. A vortex sucks creatures toward its center, then expels them.

Trigger
A vortex triggers when a nonaquatic creature moves into one of the vortex's nine squares or begins its turn in the vortex or an adjacent square.

Attack
Opportunity Action **Melee**
Target: The creature that triggered the hazard.
Attack: +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is pulled into the center square of the vortex, takes 1d12 + 4 damage, and is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Countermeasures
✦ A creature adjacent to the center square of one of the vortexes can plug or disable the vent that creates it by making an Athletics check (DC 27) or a Thievery check (DC 25).

Rock Flingers

These traps consist of magically treated rocks bound in clusters. If a creature or object moves into a magical trigger area, the rocks fly toward it.

When a rock flinger activates, read:

As you move forward, a cluster of jagged rocks suddenly flies at you. It moves so rapidly and in such a bizarre path that it must be magically pulled to your location.

2 Rock Flingers	Level 14 Blaster
Trap	XP 1,000

Limited Ammunition

Each trap has a limited number of rocks (four squares in the northern trap, five in the southern). When all rocks are destroyed, the trap is disabled.

Trigger

The trap triggers when a creature moves into a trigger zone or starts its turn in a trigger zone.

Attack

Immediate Reaction **Ranged 10**

Target: The creature that triggered the hazard.

Attack: +21 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Miss: Half damage.

Special: One square's worth of rocks is destroyed (see Limited Ammunition).

Countermeasures

- A creature adjacent to a square filled with rocks can attack the rocks (AC 10). If a square of rocks takes 10 damage in one hit, it is destroyed (see Limited Ammunition).
- A creature adjacent to a square filled with rocks can make a Thievery check (DC 25) to destroy one square of rocks.
- A creature can make an Arcana check (DC 25) to disable the trigger zone until the end of the character's next turn. (This can be used to give another character or the submersible time to cross the trigger zone).
- A creature can attack the zone with a power that affects zones (such as *dispel magic*). The zone's defense is 24 against such attacks. The power has the normal effect it would against a zone.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The glowing gems on the submersible provide dim light throughout the area.

Aquatic Area: See sidebar.

Currents: An arrow indicates a current (strength 1). When a creature moves into such a square, that creature slides 1 square in the direction of the arrow. If this slide moves the creature into another square of current, ignore the new square's current. A creature slid by a current can spend 1 square of movement to negate the slide.

Tactics

At the start of the fight, the kuo-toa expect their defenses to kill the PCs. The first time the PCs deactivate a trap, the harpooners come out of hiding and attack. They pull their opponents into a vortex or a rock trigger zone to limit their foes' mobility and deal extra damage, and they take advantage of enemies that have been dazed by the rock flingers, which they avoid.

Conclusion

The PCs don't need to disable all the traps and hazards—just enough for the *Iron Keg* to have a clear path. The submersible isn't affected by the weak currents.

Kuo-Toa Harpooner	Level 14 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 1,000

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision

HP 137; **Bloodied** 68

AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24

Speed 6, swim 6

⨁ **Harpoon** (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon

+20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is grabbed and takes ongoing 5 damage (until escape). While the target is grabbed, the kuo-toa harpooner cannot use the harpoon to make attacks.

↛ **Reeling Harpoon** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**

Ranged 5/10; +20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the kuo-to a harpooner makes a secondary attack against the same target.

Secondary Attack: +18 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pulled 3 squares.

↓ **Sticky Shield** (immediate reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will)

The kuo-toa harpooner makes an attack against the attacker: +18 vs. Refl ex; a weapon wielded by the target drops in the target's space.

Slick Maneuver (move; at-will)

A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech

Str 17 (+10)	**Dex** 17 (+10)	**Wis** 13 (+8)
Con 17 (+10)	**Int** 13 (+8)	**Cha** 15 (+9)

Equipment leather armor, slimy light shield, 4 harpoons.

Aquatic Area

This area is underwater. When fighting under-water, the following modifiers apply:

✦ Powers that have the fire keyword take a-2 penalty to attack rolls.

✦ Characters using weapons from the spear and crossbow weapon groups take no penalties to attack rolls with those weapons while fighting underwater. Characters using any other weapon take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

✦ Creatures move using their swim speed. A creature without a swim speed must use the Athletics skill to swim (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 183). **The DC to swim in this area is 15.**

✦ **Aquatic:** The kuo-toa have the aquatic ability. They gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against opponents that do not have this ability.

Kuo-toa Lair

Encounter Level 17 (7,700 XP)

Setup

The kuo-toa cave—magically sealed to keep water out—consists of a large main room with a ledge and several shallow pools, a side chamber where they keep a destrachan far voice, a room partially filled with murky water where the whip lives, and two rooms with cages where they keep prisoners and spoils.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

6 kuo-toa guards (G)
3 kuo-toa harpooners (H)
1 destrachan far voice (D)
1 kuo-toa whip (W)

When the submersible arrives at the lair, read:

The entrance to a cave is clearly visible ahead, ringed by glowing runes. The gems on the outside of the submersible's hull shine, illuminating the cave ahead with shafts of light. A dumbfounded fish-creature looks out at you, mouth agape.

The front of the submersible plows into the opening and scrapes across the coarse sand near the cave entrance. Braran shouts, "Pop the hatch and load the ballista! Time to knock the scales off these slimy bastards!"

The dwarves open the hatch so the PCs can attack. Place the PCs in squares adjacent to the submersible.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light in the southernmost room (provided by the dwarven submersible), and dim light in other rooms and corridors.

Ballista Shots: The *Iron Keg* fires ballista bolts at the enemies throughout the fight. It attacks at the end of each round.

Light Ballista (standard action; at-will)
Ranged 20/40; +18 vs. AC; 4d6 damage. If a PC decides to stay in the submersible and shoot the ballista (don't encourage it), the attack bonus is 13 + half the character's level. The ballista requires a standard action to load.

Shallow Pools: A creature standing in a shallow pool takes an extra 5 damage from lightning attacks.

Deep Pool: The room where the kuo-toa whip lives is entirely flooded. The water is 5 feet deep, and requires a DC 10 Swim check to move through. Since the water is murky, the squares are lightly obscured. A creature with normal vision treats the water as heavily obscured as long as the room is lit by only dim light. See the sidebar on page 67 for details on aquatic areas.

Runes: The runes near the cave entrance keep the water from filling the cave. They can be destroyed, but doing so takes 10 minutes.

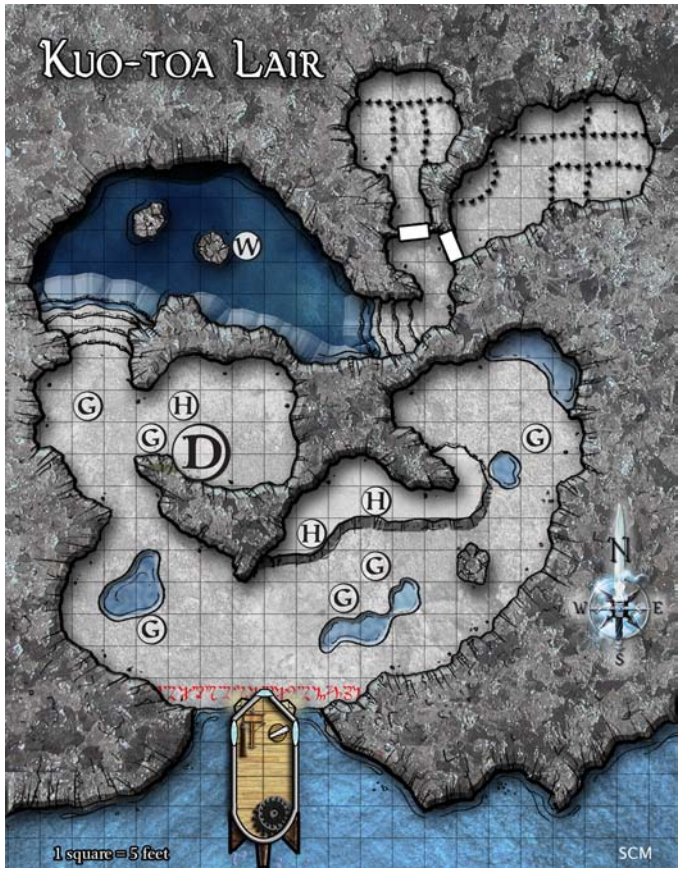
Ridge: The raised ridge is 1 square (5 feet) high, and requires a DC 15 Athletics check to climb.

Jail Cells: Cells in the large room hold five prisoners. Treasure and Lord Felmorra await in the small room.

Doors: The doors to the prison cells are locked. They can be opened with a DC 25 Thievery check or broken down with a DC 16 Strength check.

Prisoners: The five prisoners are all from the previous court of Orodaum, before Gondra took over.

- Lord Felmorra (male eladrin) the former ruler of Seryth Orodaum
- Lady Seletha (female human), Felmorra's wife
- Quarion (male half-elf), 10-year-old son of Felmorra and Seletha
- Advisor Kytala (female human) and Barraman (male human)



Moonlight Lavaliere **Level 18+**
This pendant sheds a soft moonlight glow when you are attacked, dazing enemies that hit you.

Lvl 18 +4 85,000 gp
Item Slot: Neck
Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of the encounter or until you make an attack, any creature that attacks you takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll, and any creature that hits you is dazed until the start of your next turn.

6 Kuo-toa Guards (B) **Level 16 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 350 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 29; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 23
Speed 6, swim 6

(+) **Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+21 vs. AC; 7 damage.

Slick Maneuver (move; at-will)
A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 15 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 9 (+7)
Con 15 (+10) **Int** 11 (+8) **Cha** 13 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, light shield, spear

Kuo-Toa Harpooner **Level 14 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,000

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
HP 137; **Bloodied** 68
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24
Speed 6, swim 6

(+) **Harpoon** (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
+20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is grabbed and takes ongoing 5 damage (until escape). While the target is grabbed, the kuo-toa harpooner cannot use the harpoon to make attacks.

Reeling Harpoon (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the kuo-to a harpooner makes a secondary attack against the same target.
Secondary Attack: +18 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pulled 3 squares.

Sticky Shield (immediate reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will)
The kuo-toa harpooner makes an attack against the attacker: +18 vs. Refl ex; a weapon wielded by the target drops in the target's space.

Slick Maneuver (move; at-will)
A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 17 (+10) **Dex** 17 (+10) **Wis** 13 (+8)
Con 17 (+10) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 15 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, slimy light shield, 4 harpoons.

Kuo-toa Whip (W) **Level 16 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,400

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78
AC 30; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27
Speed 6, swim 6

(+) **Pincer Staff** (standard; sustain standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). While the target is grabbed, the kuo-toa whip cannot make attacks with its pincer staff . When the kuo-toa whip sustains the grab, it deals 1d10 damage to the target. The kuo-toa whip can release the target as a minor action, sliding the target to any other square within its reach.

Lightning Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
Ranged 10; +18 vs. Refl ex; 2d8 + 5 lightning damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the kuo-toa whip's next turn.

Slime Vortex (standard; encounter)
Area burst 4 within 20; targets enemies; +18 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 5 damage, the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends), and the target slides 3 squares and is knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage, and the target slides 1 square.

Slick Maneuver (move; at-will)
A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Dungeoneering +16, Religion +15
Str 17 (+11) **Dex** 18 (+12) **Wis** 17 (+11)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 18 (+12)
Equipment coat, pincer staff , headdress

They're all weary and grimy, but only Lord Felmorra is truly unhealthy. He's been slowly starved by the kuo-toa, and is extremely thin.

Treasure: The PCs receive their share of the treasure from the dwarves, including a +4 *moonlight lavaliere*, 4,500 gp, and a suit of (nonmagical) ancient golden armor worth 7,500 gp. The dwarves are taking the rest of the treasures—worth 30,000 gp—back to the Shrouded Crags.

Destrachan Far Voice (D) **Level 15 Artillery**
Large aberrant magical beast (blind) XP 1,200

Initiative +12 Senses Perception +14; blindsight 20
HP 122; Bloodied 61
AC 28; Fortitude 32, Reflex 27, Will 25
Immune gaze
Resist 15 thunder
Speed 8, climb 4

m Claw (standard; at-will)
+20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage.

R Sound Pulse (standard; at-will) Thunder
Ranged 10; +19 vs. Refl ex; 2d8 + 8 thunder damage.

C Bellowing Blast (standard; recharge) Thunder
Close blast 5; +19 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 8 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

C Reverberate (standard; encounter) Thunder
Close burst 2; +19 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 8 thunder damage, and the target is stunned (save ends). Miss: Half damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the destrachan far voice's next turn.

Alignment Evil Languages Deep Speech
Skills Bluff +12, Stealth +17
Str 23 (+13) Dex 20 (+12) Wis 15 (+9)
Con 26 (+15) Int 10 (+7) Cha 11 (+7)

Tactics

All the guards (G) rush out to engage the PCs in melee, using *slick maneuver* to set up flanks.

The harpooners on the ledge (H) stay there, attempting to use their harpoons to reel his enemies in. They focus on targets with lighter armor, planning to pull them up onto the ledge and gang up on them. The third harpooner (H) brings the destrachan (D) around the corner and then guards the passage that leads to the water-filled room. The third harpooner keeps the destrachan near itself, and protects it if possible.

The whip (W) stands in the back, firing ranged and area attacks from the relative safety of the water-filled room. If she sees an enemy standing in a shallow pool, she uses *lightning strike* against him to benefit from the extra lightning damage. The priority of the other kuo-toa is protecting the whip.

Assault on the Crags

Gondra's forces attack the Shrouded Crags with a massive force, and *Morn's Quarrel* returns just in time to be attacked.

A1. Urgent Warnings

As they draw nearer to the Shrouded Crags, Morn receives an urgent message. He gathers the PCs, along with Lord Felmorra and his advisors, into the state room. Read:

Morn looks uneasy as he addresses the gathered group. He says, "The Shrouded Crags are in terrible danger. Prine has just sent word that Gondra has found us, and he has sent every one of his ships to destroy our home, along with every mercenary vessel he could afford. A few skirmishes have already occurred. Though we outmatch Orodaum's ships, we can't hold them off forever. Prine knew, and I know, how urgent it is that this ship arrives to stop the attack."

Morn has no further detail, because Prine had to leave to prepare the city's fortifications.

Even at its best speed, the *Morn's Quarrel* doesn't arrive for over two hours. As they draw near, the lookouts see the remains of a few vessels—both mercenary sailing ships and dwarven submersibles—sunken to the seafloor.

The ship surfaces when it's close to the Shrouded Crags, and everyone aboard can see the battle unfolding. There are several fires in the city itself, and a few ships launch blazing catapult shots toward the cliff.

A2. Wrecking the Rudders

As it moves closer to the city, but before any enemy ships are in range of its weapons, *Morn's Quarrel* is attacked by kuo-toa shamans leading swarms of dire piranhas.

At the first sign of danger, Morn tries to protect as many people as possible. He entreats the PCs to protect the ship, sends most of the crew to the ship's aft section, and takes Lord Felmorra and his group to the guest quarters and seals the doors. Morn and the others are safe during the next three encounters, though they might need help if the ship sinks afterward.

Tactical Encounter: "Wrecking the Rudders" (page 72).

A3. Breaching the Hull

Kuo-toa monitors and water archons (summoned to help Gondra) smash the windows of the ship to let their allies board it—or to sink it, whichever comes first.

Tactical Encounter: "Breaching the Hull" (page 74).

Development

The sounds of battle become less intense as this encounter finishes, and the PCs can see that the dwarves have repelled most of the invaders.

A4. Blasting the City

Mallum and Prine arrive at *Morn's Quarrel*. They show their true colors after they board, taking over the ship and trying to use its weapons to destroy the city.

These events rely on Mallum and Prine acting more quickly than the PCs can react, and consequently you as DM should act more quickly than the players can react. If they jump in and make quick decisions, they can exercise some control, but hesitation is what the boarders are looking for.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Approaching you is a wooden lifeboat that looks like it came from one of Orodaum's sailing ships. On it are Mallum, Prine, and three dwarves. Upon seeing you, Mallum waves. As they approach, you can see they are drenched and bruised from combat. Mallum yells, "We boarded and sunk an Orodaum ship, but barely got off it fast enough! There's another few ships still on their way from out in the fog, but I think we can head them off!"

As the lifeboat nears the *Morn's Quarrel*, Mallum directs the ship toward the broken window, allowing her party to board. If the PCs act quickly, they can try to stop the boarders. Otherwise, the boarders assume nobody's trying to keep them off the ship. Talking and acting quickly, Mallum, Prine, and the dwarves hasten to the front of the ship.

The dwarf arcanist and Prine move in first, then Mallum and the dwarf buccaneers slam the doors shut to the navigation room. Read the following aloud:

The group rapidly moves into the front two compartments of the ship: the weapons and navigation rooms. The buccaneers slam the doors shut tightly behind them. You see Prine set off a pulse of black energy that strikes down the few crew members remaining up front. Mallum pokes her head up to look through the portal. You can barely hear her through the thick metal door. She laughs and shouts, "Beautiful! Morn's own flagship, reducing his city to rubble!"

Tactical Encounter: "Blasting the City" (page 76).

A5. Escape from the Quarrel

The ship is slowly flooding since the windows were smashed. (If the PCs kept the windows from being smashed, and the ship never flooded, this is less an escape and more a simple exit.)

Helping Morn, Lord Felmorra's entourage, and the crew escape is a skill challenge.

Abandon Ship	**Level 16**
Skill Challenge	XP 7,000 XP
The ship is lost. All hands must abandon ship before it slips beneath the waves!	

The PCs try to rescue people from *Morn's Quarrel* as it sinks.

Complexity: 5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills Athletics, Diplomacy, Endurance, Heal, Intimidate.

Other Skills Dungeoneering.

Victory: Each success represents one person rescued. (A failure is a setback, but doesn't mean anyone died—that only happens if the PCs are defeated in the skill challenge.) The people who need rescue are:

1. Morn
2. Lord Felmorra
3. Lady Seletha
4. Quarion
5. Advisor Kytala
6. Advisor Barraman
7. Dwarf crew
8. Dwarf crew
9. Dwarf crew
10. Dwarf crew
11. Dwarf crew
12. Dwarf crew

Roll randomly to see who is rescued each time (reroll repeated numbers). Roll before describing the result, so you can make your description appropriate. A character can try to rescue a specific person, but he or she takes a –2 penalty to skill checks while doing so.

Defeat: Roll 1d20 for each character still in the ship. On a 10 or higher, the character escapes; otherwise, he or she perishes. Morn and Lord Felmorra gain a +5 bonus to this roll. (See sidebar.)

Athletics DC 22 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC swims, pulling someone along. (Include any special bonuses the PC gains while swimming).

Diplomacy DC 24 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC convinces someone who is afraid to leave the ship, or insists on going down with the ship, that it's time to go.

Dungeoneering DC 25 (0 successes, but grants a +2 bonus to PC's next skill check during the challenge). The PC figures out the best escape routes from the ship.

Endurance DC 24 (1 success, no maximum successes; on a roll of 29 or more, PC gains +2 bonus to next skill check during the challenge). The PC is tenacious, and doesn't need to stop to rest before rescuing another person.

Heal DC 24 (1 success, maximum 1 success). One of the people is injured. The PC patches up the wound to let the person swim out. This skill can only be used once.

Intimidate DC 28 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC barks orders that keep the evacuation swift and orderly, preventing panic and chaos as water fills the ship.

Development

The survivors from *Morn's Quarrel* make it back to dry land. Morn surveys the damage to the city and his fleet; although the defense of the city was successful, many died to save it. The next step is to take the fight to Gondra, liberating Seryth Orodaum from his clutches.

Wrecking the Rudders

Encounter Level 15 (6,000 XP)

Setup

At the rear of *Morn's Quarrel*, piranhas with enormous teeth try to ruin the rudders and force the vessel to stop. They are led by two kuo-toa.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

2 kuo-toa piranha shamans (K)
2 dire piranha swarms (P)

When the PCs leave the hatch, read:

As you open the hatch, the rushing wind pelts you with cold seawater. The enormous metal rudders of Morn's Quarrel sway from side to side as they correct the vessel's course. You see creatures approaching from both sides: two schools of enormous piranhas, and two kuo-toa who appear to be leading the fish toward the rear of the ship.

Vessel in Motion

Creatures can stand on the hull of *Morn's Quarrel*. Moving onto the ship from the water requires an extra square of movement.

Throughout this encounter, *Morn's Quarrel* is still in motion. This has two effects.

Moving Forward: A PC that ends his turn in a square of water slides 1 square away from the front of the ship. (Though the ship and other creatures are the ones moving, this is the easiest way to model the movement.) Creatures with swim speeds (such as the enemies) can keep up with the ship, and don't suffer this effect.

Unstable Surface: The ship is stable enough that a creature moving across it doesn't normally need to make an Acrobatics check to balance. However, a creature standing on the vessel might fall when it turns or hits rough water. At the end of each round, roll 1d6. If you roll a 5 or 6, each creature standing on the ship must make an Acrobatics check (DC 22 if you rolled a 5, DC 27 if you rolled a 6) or take 1d10 damage and fall prone. For a creature standing on a rudder, increase the DCs by 5, and a failure causes the creature to fall into the water in a square adjacent to the rudder.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright, provided by direct sunlight.

Morn's Quarrel: Creatures can stand on top of *Morn's Quarrel*. See the "Vessel in Motion" section.

Rudders: The rudders have 100 hit points, AC 3, and Fortitude 20. When reduced to 0 hit points, the rudders are unable to control the vessel, and *Morn's Quarrel* goes out of control.

Tactics

If they aren't fighting the PCs, the piranhas strike at the rudders. If the PCs engage them, the piranhas try to stay adjacent to the rudders to hit them with *swarm attack*. Describe the attacks on the rudders, as the piranhas make deep gouges in them and eventually break off chunks of metal.

The kuo-toa piranha shamans stay back and use their area attacks. If a PC engages a shaman in melee, it uses *psychic waves* to escape and, it hopes, leave the PC behind as the ship travels forward. If a piranha swarm is destroyed by a PC, the shamans focus their fire on that PC for a while.

Expected Destruction

The three encounters here (Wrecking the Rudders, Breaching the Hull, and Seizing the Weapons) are based on the results expected from previous encounters. Here's what should happen, on average, and how to deal with different results:

- In "Wrecking the Rudders" (A2), the rudders remain intact and the ship can still change course. *If the rudders are ruined: Morn's Quarrel* goes out of control, which means it continues moving in the same direction, it can't turn. This won't have much effect on the encounters, but makes the escape from the vessel more dangerous and could mean *Morn's Quarrel* crashes into the docks and damages the city.
- In "Breaching the Hull" (A3), the archons and monitors should easily do enough damage to break the windows. *If they don't smash the windows:* Likely, this means the fight was a cakewalk for the PCs. Have Mallum, Prine, and their allies find another way in (possibly as simple as convincing the PCs to open the hatch) and take over that way. Ignore the flooding mentioned in the next encounter.
- In "Blasting the City," the PCs are expected to stop Prine and the dwarf from shooting more than one bolt at the city. *If the PCs can't reach them in time:* The city sustains massive damage, but give the PCs a little more time to break through. If they just plain *can't,* Morn has a failsafe that scuttles the ship and shuts down the lightning cannon.
- During the skill challenge, it's expected that at least Morn and Lord Felmorra will survive. *If Morn doesn't survive:* Replace all later references to him with Braran. *If Lord Felmorra dies:* Lady Seletha takes over for him.

2 Kuo-toa Piranha Shamans (K) **Level 16 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,400 each

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
HP 117; **Bloodied** 58
AC 28; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29
Speed 6, swim 6

Bite (standard; at-will)
+21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.

Psychic Fangs (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Area burst 1 within 10; +19 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 damage.

Bane Lightning (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Lightning, Poison**
Area burst 3 within 20; +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 lightning damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison (save ends).

Psychic Waves (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic**
Close burst 2; +19 vs. Will; 3d10 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). *Effect:* The kuo-toa shifts its speed.

Piranha Command (minor; at-will)
A piranha swarm within sight shifts 1. If the swarm is in a creature's space, that creature moves with the swarm.

Slick Maneuver (move; at-will)
A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +15, Nature +17
Str 12 (+9) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 18 (+12)
Con 15 (+10) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 23 (+14)
Equipment torn rags, light shield, sand orb

Conclusion

If the rudder is destroyed, the kuo-toa attempt to withdraw at the first opportunity, taking the piranha with them. Otherwise, the encounter continues until all enemies are eliminated.

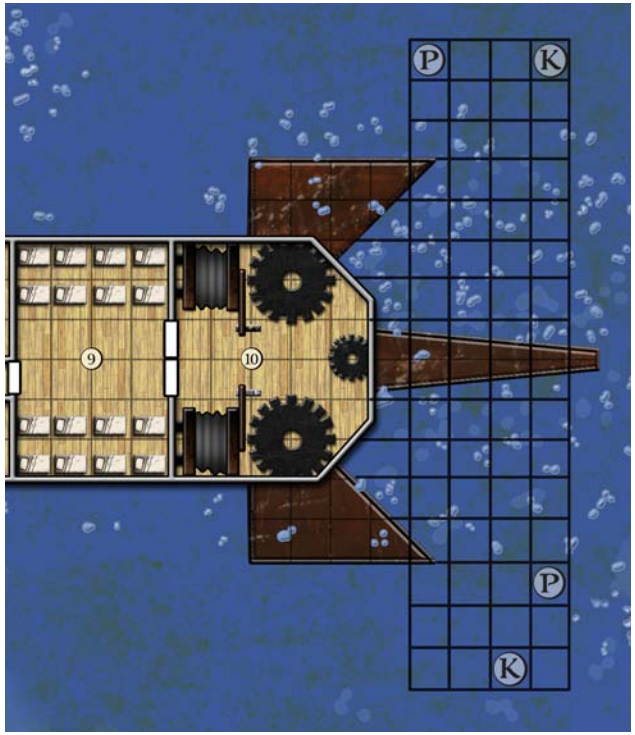
2 Dire Piranha Swarms (P) **Level 17 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast (aquatic, swarm) XP 1,600 each

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +10
Swarm Attack aura 1; the dire piranha swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura.
HP 164; **Bloodied** 82
AC 31; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 26
Immune forced movement from melee and ranged; **Resist** half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks.
Speed swim 8; can enter or move through an enemy's space (this movement does not provoke opportunity attacks)

Swarm of Teeth (standard; at-will)
+22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, or 3d8 + 7 damage against a bloodied target.

Disperse (immediate interrupt, when hit by a melee or ranged attack; encounter)
The swarm takes half damage from the attack.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages**—
Str 14 (+10) **Dex** 27 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 1 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+7)



Breaching the Hull

Encounter Level 16 (6,600 XP)

Setup

The kuo-toa continue to assault *Morn's Quarrel*, this time attempting to break inside through the large windows in the state room.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

3 kuo-toa monitors (M)
2 water archon wavecrashers (A)

If the PCs stayed outside the ship or go out to fight the new attackers, read:

Five figures knife through the water toward Morn's Quarrel. They head toward the state room of the vessel.

When the PCs are outside the ship, the PCs prepare to go outside the ship, or the monsters attack the windows, roll initiative.

If a window is breached, read:

The window—an enormous pane of reinforced crystal—shatters after a devastating attack. Shards break away as water pours into the state room, washing the furniture away and flooding into the other parts of the ship. The dwarves inside shout as they seal hatches to slow the flooding of the rest of the ship.

Vessel in Motion

Creatures can stand on the hull of *Morn's Quarrel*. Moving onto the ship from the water requires an extra square of movement.

Throughout this encounter, *Morn's Quarrel* is still in motion. This has two effects.

Moving Forward: A PC that ends his turn in a square of water slides 1 square away from the front of the ship. (Though the ship and other creatures are the ones moving, this is the easiest way to model the movement.) Creatures with swim speeds (such as the enemies) can keep up with the ship, and don't suffer this effect.

Unstable Surface: The ship is stable enough that a creature moving across it doesn't normally need to make an Acrobatics check to balance. However, a creature standing on the vessel might fall when it turns or hits rough water. At the end of each round, roll 1d6. If you roll a 5 or 6, each creature standing on the ship must make an Acrobatics check (DC 22 if you rolled a 5, DC 27 if you rolled a 6) or take 1d10 damage and fall prone. For a creature standing on a rudder, increase the DCs by 5, and a failure causes the creature to fall into the water in a square adjacent to the rudder.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light.

Morn's Quarrel: Creatures can stand on top of Morn's Quarrel. See the "Vessel in Motion" section.

Windows: The windows of Morn's Quarrel have 50 hit points, AC 5, and Fortitude 10. When reduced to 0 hit points, the windows shatter. This lets creatures enter and causes the vessel to begin filling with water (but it doesn't yet sink).

Hatches: A kuo-toa monitor might try to tear open a sealed hatch. This requires a DC 25 Strength check (a standard action).

Tactics

The water archons go directly to the side of the ship and strike at the same window. If they are adjacent to both a PC and the vessel, they use *double attack* to strike once at the window and once at the hero. They stay intent on their goal, and stay next to the ship to keep attacking it. Once the windows have been broken, the archons try to disengage, their duty fulfilled.

If characters stay on top of the vessel instead of entering in the water, kuo-toa monitors will go after them, especially if they are controllers or strikers. If the water archons are able to keep attacking the windows, the kuo-toa focus on taking out their foes. But if both archons are defeated, the kuo-toa refocus their efforts on breaching the vessel's defenses.

Aquatic Area

Creatures fighting in the water deal with the following conditions:

- Powers that have the fire keyword take a –2 penalty to attack rolls.
- Characters using weapons from the spear and crossbow weapon groups take no penalties to attack rolls with those weapons while fighting underwater. Characters using any other weapon take a –2 penalty to attack rolls.
- Creatures move using their swim speed. A creature without a swim speed must use the Athletics skill to swim (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 183). **The DC to swim in this area is 15.**
- **Aquatic:** The kuo-toa and piranhas have the aquatic ability. They gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against enemies that do not have this ability.

2 Water Archon Wavecrashers (A) **Level 15 Brute**
Medium elemental humanoid (aquatic, water) XP 1,200

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 175; **Bloodied** 87; see also *bloodied whirlpool*
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 25
Immune disease; **Resist** 10 fire, 10 poison
Saving Throws +2 against immobilized, restrained, or slow
Speed 7, swim 10

Coral Crescent (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage (crit 11 + 2d6).

Double Attack standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
The water archon makes two *coral crescent* attacks.

Wave Crash standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ Weapon
Close burst 1; +18 vs. AC; 4d6 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the archon's next turn.

Bloodied Whirlpool (when first bloodied)
Close burst 2; +18 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 damage, and slide the target 5 squares. The target must remain within the burst during the slide.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Primordial
Str 17 (+10) **Dex** 25 (+14) **Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 15 (+9) **Int** 14 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+8)
Equipment plate armor, 2 coral crescents

3 Kuo-toa Monitors (K) **Level 16 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,400

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 153; **Bloodied** 76
AC 30; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26
Speed 6, swim 6

Slam (standard; at-will)
+21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage.

Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +21 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.

Leap Kick (standard; at-will)
The kuo-toa monitor shifts 2 squares and makes a slam attack.

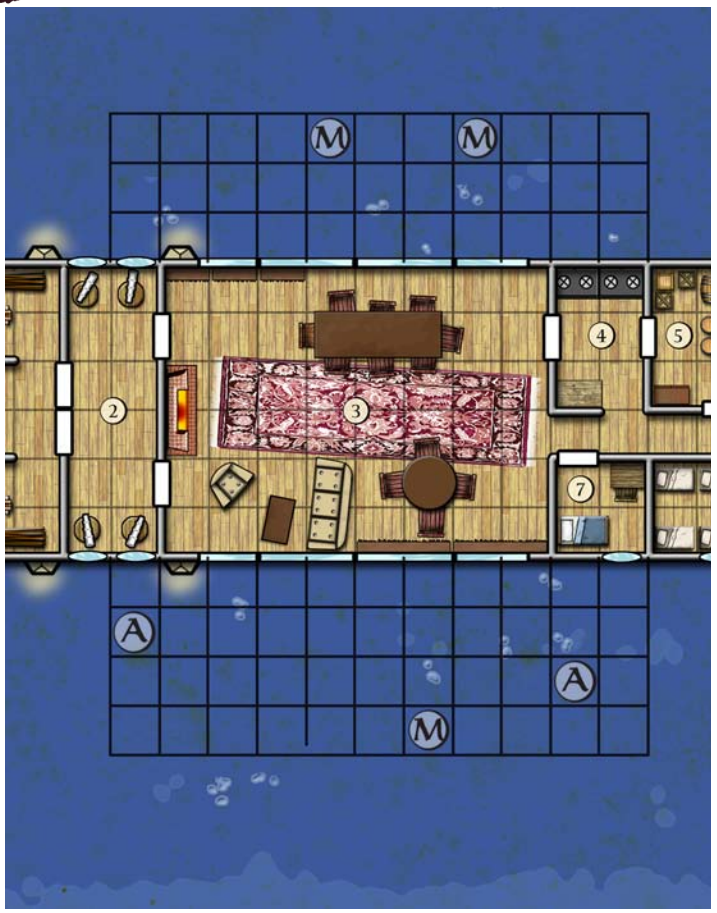
Lightning Fist (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**
+19 vs. Refl ex; 3d8 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

Slick Maneuver (move; at-will)
A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Acrobatics +18, Dungeoneering +15
Str 19 (+12) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 15 (+10)
Con 17 (+11) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 16 (+11)
Equipment leather armor, crossbow with 20 bolts

Conclusion

Once the attackers break all the windows on that side of the stateroom, they withdraw at the first opportunity. Otherwise, the encounter ends when the PCs eliminate all the attackers.



Blasting the City

Encounter Level 18 (9,000 XP)

Setup

Their treachery revealed, Mallum and Prine try to activate the ships weapons and hold the PCs back so they won't be stopped.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

Mallum (M)
Prine (P)
2 dwarf buccaneers (B)
1 dwarf dark arcanist (A)

After Mallum and Prine go to the front of the vessel, read:

Through the windows in the thick metal doors, you see the dwarf buccaneers. They stand next to the doors of the observation room, keeping a firm grip on the door handles. Behind them, in the weapons compartment, Prine and the third dwarf begin preparing the magic orbs that power the ship's lightning cannon.

Mallum moves to the side in the observation room and hides. If a PC moves adjacent to a door or to the windows outside, the PC makes a Perception check.

If a PC sees Mallum, read:

Mallum is pressed against the wall in the corner of the observation room, hiding behind one of the spyglasses.

Show the player her location on the map.

Mallum (M) **Level 17 Elite Lurker**
Small natural humanoid XP 3,200

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +15
HP 240; **Bloodied** 120; see also *bloodied disappearance*
AC 33; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 30
Saving Throws +2; +5 against fear effects
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Kukri (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+22 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage (reroll all 1s on damage), and slide the target 1 square.

Thrown Kukri (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +22 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage (reroll all 1s on damage).

Blood in the Water (standard; recharge when a creature saves against this power) ✦ **Weapon**
+22 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends). *Miss:* Ongoing 5 damage (save ends). *Effect:* Mallum gains a +2 bonus to attack and defense against an enemy with ongoing damage from this power.

Blinding Counterattack (immediate reaction when hit by an attack, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 1 or ranged 5/10; the creature that hit her; +22 vs. Reflex; the target is blinded (save ends).

Combat Advantage
Mallum deals an extra 2d8 damage on melee attacks against any targets she has combat advantage against.

Bloodied Disappearance (free, when first bloodied; encounter)
Mallum becomes invisible until the end of her next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Acrobatics +23, Athletics +21, Bluff +18, Stealth +21, Thievery +23
Str 16 (+11) **Dex** 26 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 12 (+9) **Int** 16 (+11) **Cha** 21 (+13)
Equipment leather armor, kukris (5)

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light provided by illumination gems mounted throughout the interior of *Morn's Quarrel*.

Metal Doors: The doors between the observation room and weapons room are open. The doors between the state room and observation room are held shut. A PC can make an opposed Strength check against the dwarf buccaneer on the other side. Breaking down the door requires a DC 25 Strength check and knocks prone the dwarf on the other side. A door has AC 5, Fortitude 10, and 60 HP.

Walls: Walls have AC 4, Fortitude 12, and 120 HP. A DC 30 Strength check breaks a wall down.

Hatches: A character who goes outside the ship can tear open the sealed hatch that leads into the observation room with a DC 25 Strength check.

Windows: A character who goes outside can try to break open the windows into the observation room

Prine (P) **Level 16 Elite Controller**
Medium natural humanoid XP 2,800

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision
HP 302; **Bloodied** 151
AC 32; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 31; see also *enfeebling defense*
Resist see *energy shield*
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

Staff (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+19 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage.

Frost Ray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 20; two targets; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 9 cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Acid Tendrils (standard; at-will) ✦ Acid
Close burst 2; two targets; +20 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 7 acid damage, ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends), and slide the target 3 squares.

Transferring Ray (standard; encounter) ✦ **Force, Teleportation**
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 7 force damage, and the target is immobilized. Prine teleports to a square within 2 of the target.

Enfeebling Defense (immediate interrupt, when hit by a melee attack; encounter)
The attacker is weakened until the end of Prine's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven, Elven
Skills Arcana +20, Diplomacy +20, Insight +18
Str 10 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+10) **Wis** 16 (+11)
Con 15 (+10) **Int** 25 (+15) **Cha** 20 (+13)
Equipment *+4 staff of power*, robes

(there aren't any into the weapons chamber). The windows have 50 hit points, AC 5, and Fortitude 10.

Lightning Orbs: Destroying one lightning orb disarms the cannon. An orb has AC 10, Fortitude 5, and 5 HP. A character who uses a melee attack to destroy an orb coated with powder (see Tactics) takes 5d6 poison damage.

Treasure: Prine's staff is a *+4 staff of power.*

Flooding

If the doors to the front of the ship are opened, the area begins flooding. The water reaches farther at the start of each round after the doors are opened:

Round 1: Squares in the observation area are difficult terrain.

Round 2: Squares in the weapon area are difficult terrain.

Round 3: The lightning orbs electrify the water in the weapons room, dealing 3d10 lightning damage to everyone who begins his turn in the room.

2 Dwarf Buccaneers (B) **Level 14 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,000 each

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 139; **Bloodied** 69
AC 28; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 23
Saving Throws +5 against poison effects
Speed 6

Cutlass (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage (crit 22 + 2d8).

Stalwart Shift (move; at-will)
The dwarf buccaneer shifts 1 square and one dwarf ally within 5 can also shift one square.

Nerves of Steel (minor; encounter)
The dwarf buccaneer makes a saving throw against one effect that a save can end.

Stand Your Ground
When an effect forces a dwarf to move, the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Athletics +18, Dungeoneering +11, Endurance +18, Intimidate +12

Str 22 (+13)	**Dex** 22 (+13)	**Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 19 (+11)	**Int** 10 (+7)	**Cha** 10 (+7)

Equipment leather armor, cutlass (scimitar)

Dwarf Dark Arcanist (A) **Level 14 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 104; **Bloodied** 52
AC 26; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26; see also *arcane leech*
Saving Throws +5 against poison effects
Speed 6

Unarmed Attack (standard; at-will)
+17 vs. AC; 1d4 + 6 damage.

Necrotic Ray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 4 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic (save ends).

Dark Flames (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies; +18 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 fire and necrotic damage.

Arcane Leech
When the dark arcanist is hit by an Arcane attack, his next ranged or area attack deals an extra 1d10 damage.

Stand Your Ground
When an effect forces a dwarf to move, the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Arcana +19, Dungeoneering +11, Endurance +11

Str 10 (+7)	**Dex** 9 (+6)	**Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 14 (+9)	**Int** 24 (+14)	**Cha** 19 (+11)

Equipment robes, wand, pouch of necrotic powder

Tactics

Prine and the dwarf dark arcanist prepare the lightning cannon to fire. If uninterrupted, they take the following actions:

Round 1: The dark arcanist coats the orbs in a strange, rust-colored powder.

Round 2: The orbs begin charging.

Round 3: The ship shudders as the lightning cannon fires an enormous bolt of purple and green lightning that strikes the cliff housing the Shrouded Crags. Smaller bolts arc over the surface of the vessel. Anyone outside the ship takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Later Rounds: Repeat rounds 2 and 3.

If PCs make it into the scouting room, Prine and the dark arcanist attack them instead of firing the lightning cannon. If cornered, Prine uses *transferring ray* to reach the other side of the party's ranks.

Mallum hides until the PCs break through. She attacks them and moves about, using *wall scurry* to stay out of harm's way in the close quarters.

The buccaneers hold the doors as long as they can. They prefer to flank a single PC and take him down.

Conclusion

Now that their treachery is apparent, the boarders have nowhere to run. They will fight to the death rather than face capture.

Return to Orodaum

Both Morn and Lord Felmorra want Gondra removed from power and captured, to face a fair punishment. Orodaum's defenses are weak, but the capital is inland and the dwarven fleet is too diminished to bring more than a handful of troops. Morn wants to send the PCs in the fastest vessel he has left so they can reach Seryth Orodaum before news of defeat reaches Gondra. Felmorra promises the eternal gratitude of Orodaum, in addition to a 15,000 gp reward if they capture Gondra alive.

This section assumes the PCs accept the mission.

R1. Return to Seryth Orodaum

Returning to the city is fairly simple: Nobody is looking for the PCs, and Gondra doesn't know they've switched sides. If the PCs try to sneak into the city and travel unnoticed, call for a brief skill challenge.

Infiltrating Seryth Orodaum **Level 16**
Skill Challenge (optional) **XP 1,400 XP**

By sticking to less traveled routes and befriending the witnesses you encounter, you attempt to slip into the city without any of Gondra's forces becoming aware of your return.

The PCs try to enter Seryth Orodaum without their identities being revealed.

Complexity 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills Bluff, Diplomacy, Nature, Stealth, Streetwise.

Other Skills Endurance, Insight.

Victory The PCs infiltrate Seryth Orodaum successfully, reaching Gondra's palace without being detected or recognized as hostile. The PCs automatically gain a surprise round at the beginning of the tactical encounter in R2, below.

Defeat The PCs are spotted before they reach the palace; see R2, below.

Bluff DC 24 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC pretends to be someone else, inventing details about an imaginary person.

Diplomacy DC 28 (1 success, maximum 1 success). The PC convinces people that the PCs' passing is not a noteworthy event, and no one else need know.

Diplomacy (advanced) DC 24 (1 success, maximum 1 success; see Streetwise). If the PCs have met groups who oppose Gondra by using the Streetwise skill, they can befriend them more easily.

Endurance DC 24 (0 successes, but grants +2 bonus to next Bluff, Nature, or Stealth check). The PC keeps a vigilant guard over the party, even if it means long days and nights on watch.

Insight DC 31 (0 successes, but allow that PC to reroll his or her next failed skill check). With keen instincts, the PC can tell when people are suspicious of the party.

Nature DC 24 (1 success, no maximum successes). By traveling on less well-traveled paths, the PC helps the party avoid large groups.

Stealth DC 29 (1 success, no maximum successes). The PC helps the party stick to the shadows and travel without being seen.

Streetwise DC 28 (1 success, maximum 1 success). By finding other people who want Gondra ousted from power, the PC finds secure means to travel. This allows the advanced use of the Diplomacy skill.

Special A PC who uses disguise powers (such as the changeling's change shape or invisibility utility powers) scores an automatic success. Each PC can gain only one success in this way.

R2. No Admittance

Just before the PCs arrive, Gondra learns about the defeat—and he learns the PCs were fighting against his invasion. He puts his guards on alert, and they will attempt to stop the PCs on sight.

If the PCs succeeded at the skill challenge in R1, they have an automatic surprise round. Otherwise, the guards will attack them on sight, but the PCs can attempt to sneak past them.

Tactical Encounter: "No Admittance" (page 79).

R3. Gondra's Throne Room

The PCs have a chance to take a short rest before trying to break into Gondra's throne room to capture him.

Tactical Encounter: "Gondra's Throne Room" (page 81).

Concluding the Adventure

Lord Felmorra and Morn travel to Seryth Orodaum after Gondra's capture, and Felmorra continues his rule. He decides that the confederacy Gondra created is a worthy enterprise, and allows any city that wants to stay allied to do so. He invites Morn, who accepts.

Gondra spends many years in jail for his deceit and warmongering.

Lord Felmorra gladly pays the PCs the promised 15,000 gp reward (or 10,000 gp if they killed Gondra). At your discretion, the PCs can ask for a dwarven submersible instead of their gold reward. Use the vehicle statistics on page 60. (If the PCs try to sell the vehicle later, it has a sell price of 13,000 gp.)

If the PCs wish to continue working with Orodaum and the Shrouded Crags, they can seek out more aquatic enemies.

The wintery lands to the north are largely unexplored, and the PCs can travel there to find adventure.

NO ADMITTANCE

Encounter Level 17 (8,600 XP)

Setup

Gondra, ruler of the Confederacy of Orodaum, has a throne room just beyond the rooms shown here. The PCs might attempt to enter stealthily if they have concealed their presence in the city; otherwise, they'll probably have to resort to brute force.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

8 human archer minions (A)
4 minotaur mercenaries (M)
1 psychic mage (P)

Passive Perception

DC 35 *You see some faint footprints in a corner of the room, but they're cut off at the wall. There must be a secret door hidden there.*

Show the player the location of the secret door.

Surprise

If the PCs successfully completed the skill challenge in R1, they automatically gain a surprise round at the beginning of this encounter. If the PCs continue using Stealth during or after the surprise round, have them make Stealth checks against the guards' passive Perception. The highest is 23, for the archer minions and minotaur mercenaries.

If the PCs failed the skill challenge in R1, or if they made no effort to conceal their approach, the guards are on high alert, attacking the PCs on sight.

When a PC first encounters a minotaur, have him make a History check:

DC 20 *These minotaurs wear red sashes, a decoration mandated by law for all mercenaries working in Orodaum.*

Features of the Area

Illumination: Torch sconces on the exterior walls, candles on the interior walls, and chandeliers overhead provide bright illumination.

Walls: The outside walls of the compound are 3 squares (15 feet) high, and quite smooth. A DC 25 Athletics check is required to climb them. A character who climbs in from outside can enter the area with the walkways or the area of vegetation on the southern edge of the hall.

Psychic Mage **Level 15 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,200

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +10
Psychic Ripples aura 2; enemies starting their turns in the area take 5 psychic damage. Allies in the aura gain a +2 power bonus to Will defense.
HP 141; **Bloodied** 70
AC 29; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 31
Resist 5 psychic
Speed 6

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage.

Mental Block (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +19 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 psychic damage, and a creature of the psychic mage's choice is invisible to the target until the end of the psychic mage's next turn.

Mesmerize (standard; encounter) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged sight; +19 vs. Will; the target is stunned (save ends).

Frightful Orb (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Area burst 2 within 20; +19 vs. Will; 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target uses its first action on its next turn to move at least three squares away from the psychic mage.

Numb to Pain (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
One ally within 10 squares gains 15 temporary hit points.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +19, Bluff +17
Str 9 (+6) **Dex** 12 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+10)
Con 13 (+8) **Int** 25 (+14) **Cha** 20 (+12)
Equipment crystal orb, robes

8 Human Archer Minions (A) **Level 13 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 200 each

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 25; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24
Speed 6

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 7 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +20 vs. AC; 8 damage

Coordinated Shot (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The human archer makes a basic attack. The next human archer to attack the same target gains a +2 power bonus to the attack roll.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 24 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 11 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+7)
Equipment leather armor, bow, arrows (10)

4 Minotaur Mercenaries (M) **Level 15 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,200 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +13
HP 150; **Bloodied** 75; see also *ferocity*.
AC 31; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26; see also *shield spikes*.
Speed 5

Battleaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+22 vs. AC; 2d12 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the minotaur mercenary's next turn.

Goring Charge (standard; at-will)
The minotaur mercenary makes a charge attack: +22 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Ferocity (when reduced to 0 hit points)
The minotaur mercenary makes a melee basic attack.

Shield Spikes (free, when missed by a melee attack; at-will)
The attacker takes 2d6 damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Intimidate + 13, Nature +13
Str 25 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 18 (+11)
Con 22 (+13) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 13 (+8)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, battleaxe

Windows: A character who climbs up to a window (2 squares/10 feet high) can try to enter one. All windows are covered with iron bars, which require a DC 25 Strength check or DC 30 Thievery check to remove.

Walkways: The railed walkways are 1 square tall. Falling off doesn't deal any damage.

Arrow Slits: A character behind an arrow slit has superior cover.

Tables: A creature standing behind a table gains normal cover.

Doors: Most doors in the area require a DC 16 Strength check to break down, and have AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, and 20 HP.

The doors to the war room are iron, and are locked. Unlocking one requires a DC 30 Thievery check. They require a DC 25 Strength check to break down, and have AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, and 60 HP.

The double doors to Gondra's throne room are thick and barred shut. They require a DC 23 Strength check to break down, and have AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, and 40 HP.

Papers: A map and many documents lie on the table in the war room. The papers describe details about the attack on the Shrouded Crags. The map shows the area around Orodaum in high detail. The area around the Shrouded Crags was added recently. The map describes several nearby dungeons said to contain great treasures.

Treasure: There is a +4 *poisoned weapon* or a +4 *jarring weapon* (of a weapon type of your choice) in the weapons rack inside the war room.

Tactics

Minotaur Mercenaries: The minotaur mercenaries fight intelligently and fall back if outnumbered. When the minotaurs are close to death (at 20 HP or lower), they surrender rather than be killed.

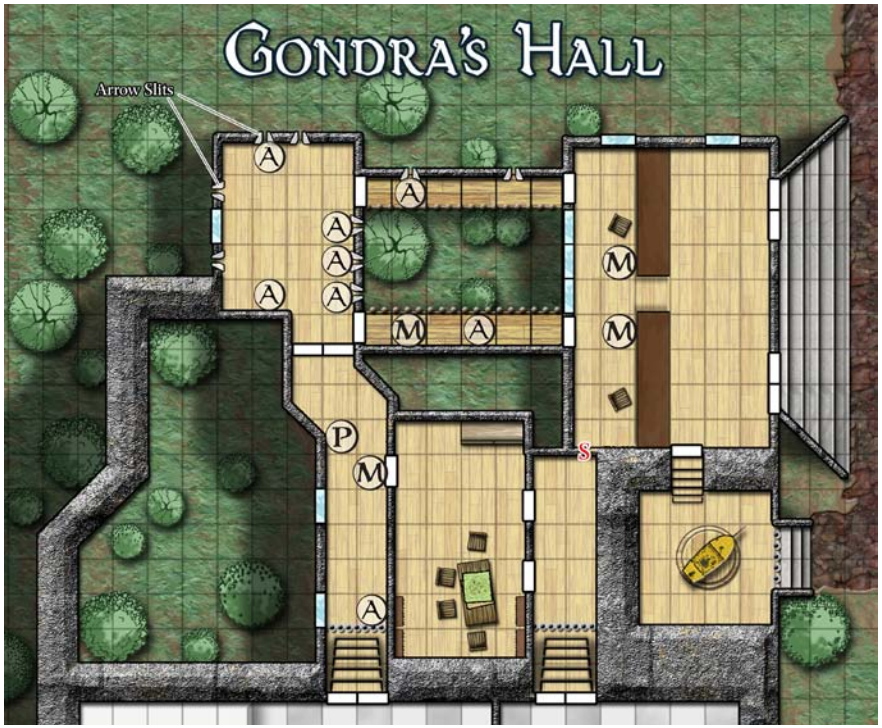
The two in the front room try to keep anyone from exiting to other areas, but fall back if outnumbered. They will open the doors to the walkway so the archers can provide support, if needed.

The minotaur on the walkway readies an action to charge an enemy who comes through the door, but will go to help out in the front room is the battle is taking a long time.

The minotaur near the war room guards it diligently. If he hears anyone moving through the secret hallway, he passes through the war room to reach them.

Archers: The minions fire from safety, and keep shifting back when creatures engage them in melee.

Psychic Mage: Content to stay in his hallway, the psychic mage will have the minotaur guarding the war room open the double doors to the room to the west if he hears fighting there. He bombards the PCs from a distance and has the minotaur guard him.



Conclusion

After fighting through this section of Gondra's Hall, the PCs can have a chance to rest. The doors to Gondra's throne room are barred, and those inside aren't eager to start fighting, so the PCs have enough time for a short rest.

Moving on to the throne room requires the PCs to either bypass or break down the door (see Features of the Area, above).

Gondra's Throne Room

Encounter Level 18 (9,600 XP)

Setup

Gondra holds court from here, and awaits the invading PCs when they break through the door.

This encounter includes the following creatures.

Gondra (G)
4 human soldiers (S)
2 nabassu gargoyles (N)

This encounter also includes a trap.

Mind-control pillars

When the PCs enter the room, read:

Gondra gives you a disdainful glare, and says, "I should have known better than to hire thugs like you. Have you have no decency? You would follow those treacherous cave-dwellers and that pathetic Lord Felmorra? So be it."

If the PCs try to talk further with Gondra, he meets most discussion with scorn and insults. Only two questions prompt specific answers:

Why did you kidnap Felmorra and take over?

"Because Orodaum is strong under my rule, and a united front against any who oppose us!"

Why did you ally with the kuo-toa?

"My alliance ended the enmity between the sea-dwellers and my people! My actions protected us all!"

Perception Check
DC 20 *You notice the windows in this room are protected by adamantine bars.*
DC 31 *Out of the corner of your eye, you see one of the statues behind Gondra's throne move slightly.*

Arcana Check
DC 25 *The pillars in this hall have magical symbols carved into them—the kind used to influence minds.*

Mind-Control Pillars

When activated by Gondra, the pillars manipulate the minds of those nearby. Gondra normally uses this to make visitors agreeable to suggestion, but now he uses it in his defense.

A pillar activates when a creature moves adjacent to it.

When a PC activates a pillar, read:

As you move you begin to feel unsure that attacking Gondra is the right thing to do.

Mind-Control Pillars	**Level 15 Warder**
Trap	XP 1,200

Trap: The pillars in Gondra's throne room compel creatures not to harm Gondra and make them more suggestible.

Trigger
A character moves into a square adjacent to a pillar, or begins its turn in a square adjacent to a pillar.

Attack ✦ Charm, Psychic
Opportunity Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each of Gondra's enemies in burst.
Attack: +18 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + 6 psychic damage, and the target has a -5 penalty to attack Gondra (save ends).
Miss: The target has a -2 penalty to attack Gondra (save ends).

Trigger
The start of Gondra's turn.

Attack ✦ Charm, Psychic
Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 10
Target: One creature in burst (Gondra's choice).
Attack: +18 vs. Will
Hit: The target takes a -5 penalty when attacking Gondra (save ends).
Special: Only one pillar takes this action per round.

Countermeasures
- ✦ Each pillar can be destroyed. Each has AC/Reflex 4, Fortitude 12, and 80 HP.
- ✦ An Arcana check (DC 33) reverses the effect, making the pillar attack Gondra and his allies instead of his enemies. This lasts one round, and the penalty to attacks works on attacks against the person who made the Arcana check instead attacks against Gondra.

- A creature can disarm one pillar by making two DC 30 Thievery checks.
- A creature can trick the pillars into thinking that creature is Gondra's ally with a Bluff check (DC 27). If the creature attacks Gondra, this ends and the creature can't Bluff the pillars again.
- The effect ends if Gondra is reduced to 0 hit points or knocked unconscious.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light from multiple candles in wall sconces and chandeliers overhead.

Dais: The throne sits on a 3-foot-high raised dais. It requires 1 extra square of movement to move onto the dais from the floor, or no extra movement with an Athletics check to jump (DC 30, 15 with a running start).

Windows: The windows here are barred with adamantine. They can be bent open with a Strength check (DC 33).

Furniture: A creature standing behind a couch or table gains normal cover.

Tactics

The soldiers try to hold back anyone coming through the doors.

The nabassu gargoyles are not in stone form at the start of the fight, but they are standing still so they appear to be statues. The have readied actions to charge anyone who comes onto the dais or stairs. They try to keep enemies away from Gondra, using their aura and stone form to create zones of control.

Gondra strikes quickly, then retreats. He uses his stances often, going into *acrobatic stance* when enemies have kept away from him and into *riposte stance* when they have entered melee with him. Describe his stance changes clearly to give the PCs a hint on how to attack him. When he enters riposte stance, he holds his blade in front of him to jab anyone who comes in to attack; when he's in acrobatic stance, his eyes are on characters far away, and his feet shifting constantly so he can move out of the way quickly.

Gondra **Level 17 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 3,200

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 320; **Bloodied** 160
AC 33; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 31; see also *acrobatic stance* and *riposte stance*.
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7
Action Points 1

Rapier (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+22 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Double Stab (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Gondra makes two *rapier* attacks and can shift 1 before or after each one.

Chill Blade (standard; encounter) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Close burst 1; +22 vs. AC; 3d8 + 9 cold damage, and the target is slowed. *Effect:* Gondra shifts 3 squares.

Acrobatic Stance (minor; at-will) ✦ **Stance**
Gondra takes half damage from ranged and area attacks in this stance.

Riposte Stance (minor; at-will) ✦ **Stance**
While in this stance, Gondra deals 1d8 + 3 damage to any adjacent creature that attacks him.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarven, Elven
Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +17, Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19, History +18
Str 18 (+12) **Dex** 26 (+16) **Wis** 14 (+10)
Con 16 (+11) **Int** 20 (+13) **Cha** 22 (+14)
Equipment noble clothing, rapier

2 Nabassu Gargoyles **Level 18 Lurker**
Medium elemental humanoid (earth) XP 2,000 each

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
Bloodfire Gaze (**Fire**) aura 2; any creature taking ongoing damage that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 5 fi re damage and is weakened (the eff ect ends when the creature leaves the aura). This aura is not active while the nabassu gargoyle is in stone form.
HP 136; **Bloodied** 68
AC 32; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 28
Immune petrifi cation
Speed 6, fl y 8

Claw (standard; at-will)
+23 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Savage Bite (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Healing**
+23 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage, or 2d10 + 7 damage against a bloodied or weakened target. In addition, the gargoyle regains a number of hit points equal to the amount of damage dealt.

Stone Form (standard; at-will)
The gargoyle becomes a statue and gains resist 30 to all damage, regeneration 5, and tremorsense 10. It loses all other senses and can take no actions in stone form other than revert to its normal form (as a minor action).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial
Skills Stealth +21
Str 25 (+16) **Dex** 24 (+16) **Wis** 17 (+12)
Con 22 (+15) **Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+14)

Human Soldier Minions **Level 15 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid XP 300 each

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 30; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 24
Speed 6

Glaive (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 7 damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Str 18 (+11) **Dex** 22 (+13) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 14 (+9) **Int** 11 (+7) **Cha** 9 (+6)
Equipment leather armor, glaive

Conclusion

Gondra and his allies will fight to the death rather than face imprisonment at the hands of Lord Felmorra. If the PCs want to capture Gondra alive, they will have to do it without his cooperation.

About the Author

Logan Bonner works as a game designer for Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His professional RPG credits include *City of Stormreach*, *Dungeonscape*, and the *Magic Item Compendium*, as well as the newly released *Adventurer's Vault*™.

HEROIC
1–10

by Eytan Bernstein

"The Tariff of Relkingham" is an adventure for four to six 3rd-level characters. In the adventure, the PCs must race against the evil high priest and vizier of Delornen, who is trying to enact an edict that would require human sacrifices from those wishing to cross the Relkingham Waterway, an important trade crossing. Can the PCs reach the vizier before he dooms Relkingham to this evil fate?

The Tariff of Relkingham

OVER A MONTH AGO, Founder Neelani, the leader of Delornen, made it known that she was considering a sacrifice tariff in which trading parties must provide a sacrifice to Erathis each year in return for the right to use the Relkingham Waterway. She has hope that doing so will allow Erathis to bring rain to the land, since her people are currently dealing with a long-term drought that has brought great hardships to all who live in Delornen. Small groups who use the waterway, such as trading costers, might be required to have their traders sacrifice hands or eyes. Larger groups, such as those representing towns or even nations, are required to bring human sacrifices. Avonathemon, Founder Neelani's mysterious

illustrations by Randy Gallegos and Francis Tsai
cartography by Robert Lee

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vizier, was the one who had proposed it, but the citizens of Relkingham opposed the tariff. They believe that others should pay a reasonable fee for use of the waterway and feel that human sacrifice of any sort is barbaric.

So, about a month ago, Relkingham sent a group of diplomats to Founder Neelani to ask her to reconsider this plan. She agreed to think about it, but her priest-vizier Avonathemon convinced her that Erathis requires sacrifices to allow this trade. After the Relkingham contingent left, she signed the edict, but then had a change of heart after she had a vision from Erathis of the suffering that would be caused by the sacrifices. As a result, she tucked away the signed edict and summoned representatives from Relkingham to her palace in Wyllea to discuss the matter with them more fully and inform them that she might be persuaded to burn the signed edict to put their minds to rest on the matter.

The PCs might be citizens of Relkingham that are chosen to travel to Wyllea or they could be travelers asked to serve as emissaries (see Adventure Hooks for more ideas).

What she didn't know is that Avonathemon is a priest of Vecna who is a secret agent in a cult. The current cult, led by the villainous High Priest Mauthereign, has made it his mission to remove one hand and eye from each person in the world to make everyone feel the pain Vecna has suffered. The tariff is Avonathemon's way of contributing to this goal.

Avonathemon, however, has other plans. Before the PCs leave Relkingham, Avonathemon absconds with the edict and rushes with his evil minions to reach Relkingham, where he intends to read the edict on the holy altar of Erathis, an altar he plans to desecrate in the name of Vecna. Delornen holds that a signed edict sworn on an altar of Erathis is official law and cannot be repealed, except by the high priest (who is, unfortunately, also the vizier). The high priest position is a "for life" appointment, so only by killing Avonathemon or destroying the edict can the events be stopped. He knows he cannot perform the ritual to desecrate the altar at the palace because too many could see and attempt to stop him, and Relkingham is the nearest town with a sufficient altar. Knowing that the town is defenseless without its heroes, Avonathemon also hopes to summon the cult of Vecna there, who can then use the port town as a seat of power from which to further their wicked schemes. If Avonathemon enacts the edict, thousands of innocent lives will be ruined.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure is one in which the PCs must complete a series of noncombat encounters that are punctuated with tactical encounters. Depending on how they do in these, Avonathemon could have a greater or lesser headstart.

The adventure begins with a meeting between the PCs and the Relkingham mayor, which then leads to a meeting with Founder Neelani, where the PCs must quell any doubts she has about the edict. After the meeting, the PCs are supposed to return home, but Avonathemon has left guards to block their way and has magically sealed the doors. The PCs must fight the guards and unlock the door, or escape using the secret tunnel in a kitchen closet.

The PCs' path is diverted to the village of Hamona, a grim place that has already been terrorized by the Cult of Vecna. All the survivors in the village are missing their left hand and eye and are extremely distrustful of outsiders. The inhabitants of Hamona are also under a curse placed upon them by the cult in which they become undead creatures at nightfall. If the PCs succeed on a social challenge, they can convince the villagers to let them leave through the tunnel just before nightfall, barely escaping without a major fight. If not, they must fight their way through the undead villagers.

If the PCs escape, they eventually come to a burned-out schoolhouse where minions of the cult are waiting. The minions try to kill the PCs or push them into the various holes in the floor of the schoolhouse that are filled with dangerous giant rats.

When the PCs reach Relkingham, the town is in an uproar over the vizier. The townsfolk claim that the vizier expelled the priests from the temple of Erathis and locked himself inside. Depending on the success of the PCs in the various skill challenges, Avonathemon has had more or less time to perform rituals, prepare the temple's defenses, and ready himself.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs might be convinced to take on the mission to see Founder Neelani in a number of ways. Most likely, some of the PCs are citizens of Relkingham, or they have been asked by the townsfolk to serve as neutral messengers with generous compensation offered. If you wish to add more personal motivations to the adventure, choose from the following.

Promise of a Trade Partnership: One or more of the PCs is offered a share in a profitable business at the docks or is promised a discounted rate when traveling and shipping through the port.

Hobnob with Founder Neelani: The PC has the desire to become a knight or noble. The mayor of Relkingham suggests that Founder Neelani or a local lord might consider this if the PCs help.

Evil is Afoot: One of the PCs is a priest or worshiper of Erathis and is receiving horrible visions from the god in which people are losing limbs and eyes and experiencing other events of terrible suffering.

Missing Relative: One of the PCs had heard rumors of strange happenings in Hamona and hopes to stop at the village on the way back from the meeting to check on a relative. (If the PCs succeed in their mission, they can go back to Hamona after the adventure to find the lost relative as you see fit.)

Rumor of Brigands: Rumor has it that brigands infest some of the trails and roads. Perhaps one of the PCs wishes to locate and defeat these criminals on the way back from the meeting or find them and take their loot.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure is too difficult for 1st-level PCs, but it can be scaled to 2nd level. To reduce the adventure to 2nd level, do the following:

Change the social encounters with the mayor, Founder Neelani, and the villagers at Hamona to level 2.

Change the guards in the palace to Vecnan thugs. Remove the deathlock wight and the corruption corpse from the undead encounter.

Change the Vecnan mage and cult berserker in the schoolhouse to Vecnan thugs. There should now be 5 thugs.

In the temple, all the guards should be Vecnan thugs and remove the deathlock wight. Subtract 20 hit points from Avonathemon and reduce his attack bonus, damage, and defenses by 2.

To scale the adventure to 4th level, do the following:

Change the social encounters with the mayor, Founder Neelani, and the villagers at Hamona to level 4.

Change the guards in the palace to cult berserkers. Replace four of the zombie rotters with an additional corruption corpse.

Change the Vecnan thugs in the schoolhouse to cult berserkers.

In the temple, all the guards should be cult berserkers. Add 20 hit points to Avonathemon and increase his attack bonus, damage, and defenses by 2.

CALCULATING THE ADVANTAGE

It's important to keep in mind that the adventure begins counting down from the time the mayor meets with the PCs. Tally up all the successes and failures, then match the number to the Results table below to see what advantages and disadvantages Avonathemon has in the final battle.

EVENT SUCCESS OR FAILURE

Event	Success	Failure
Mayor		
Founder Neelani		
Undead		
Ambush		

Total up the number of successes and the number of failures. Subtract the failures from the successes. Consult the Results table below with the value you calculated.

For example, the PCs were successful with the mayor, the undead, and the ambush, but not Founder Neelani. The successes equal 3 and you subtract the failures, which equals 1, to come up with a result of 2. Consult the table below to determine what occurs with 2 total successes.

The table is cumulative, so if the result is a 4, the results for 3, 2, and 1 still apply. The same goes for a negative result. If the result is a -3, the results for -2 and -1 still apply.

RESULTS

Tally	Result
4	Use Vecnite thugs instead of human guards for Avonathemon's minions.
3	Avonathemon is without his encounter power: hurl into darkness.
2	The area is still hallowed: turn undead attempts receive a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Undead have a -1 penalty to attack and damage rolls in the temple.
1	Avonathemon's recharge powers recharge on a 5 or 6 instead of a 4, 5, or 6.
0	No change.
-1	Avonathemon's recharge powers recharge on a 3, 4, 5, or 6.
-2	The area is desecrated: turn undead attempts take a -2 penalty to attack and damage rolls. Undead have a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls in the temple.
-3	Avonathemon can use hurl into darkness twice in the encounter.
-4	Use cult berserkers instead of human guards for Avonathemon's servants.

The Quests

The adventure ahead has two parts. The first part entails trying to convince Neelani to consider other options than the one her vizier has suggested, and the second part sees the PCs dealing with the vizier's personal attempt to make the edict into law.

Minor Quest—Speak to Founder Neelani

The first part of the adventure includes speaking to Founder Neelani and trying to persuade her to follow a different course than the one her vizier wishes.

Reward: 500 XP and 1,000 gp (though it could go as high as 1,500 gp).

Major Quest—Dealing with the Edict

The second part of the adventure entails destroying the edict in Relkingham.

Reward: 250 XP per character, plus the mayor and Founder Neelani might award them with further money, help with something, or items (DM's discretion).

Prologue

Delornen's seat of power is the small government town of Wyllea, where Founder Neelani, the leader of this land, resides in her palace. The leader of Delornen is chosen by Erathis, who sends visions to the chosen leader to help guide the current high priest. The high priest of Erathis and vizier to Founder Neelani is Avonathemon, an elderly priest with a large and mysterious support base. Rumors abound of corruption in his ranks, but none of them have ever been substantiated.

Although Wyllea is the governmental seat, the real power and wealth is in Relkingham, a port town that sits on a land bridge between two large continents. Avonathemon has recently announced that Erathis wishes to impose a sacrifice tariff. This tariff would require that those wishing to cross the land bridge must make a sacrifice. Smaller groups, or those sending small contingents, are expected to sacrifice the hands or eyes of those who cross. Larger groups with bigger stakes must bring human sacrifices to the temple of Erathis.

The vizier claims that by pleasing Erathis with these sacrifices, he can bring rain to end the terrible drought that has gone on in Delornen all summer. Many are skeptical of this because of the peace-loving nature of Erathis, but no one wants to argue with the holiest person in the land.

Unsurprisingly, the announcement of this policy has sent ripples through the sleepy town of Relkingham, an easygoing, albeit decadent port town of merchants and sailors. The citizens have already sent a group to Founder Neelani that attempted to express their distaste for this policy. Founder Neelani said she would consider their request, but it has been a month and she has sent no word of her ruling.

In the time since the announcement, increasing reports of brigands and Vecnite cult activities have come to the light. Citizens have trickled into the town missing eyes and hands, unable to speak of what happened to them.

Becoming nervous, Mayor Joren of Relkingham has asked to meet with the PCs to discuss the situation.

Part 1: Meeting with the Mayor

Whether the PCs are well known to the mayor or just passing adventurers, start the skill challenge when they are escorted into the mayor's office. The negotiation with the mayor is the first part of a two-part social skill challenge that culminates with the meeting with Founder Neelani.

You are escorted by two guards through the lavish town hall, passing numerous statues of former mayors, town merchants, and elders. The simple opulence of the edifice bespeaks old money and a level of decadence not seen in most other lands. The guards open the doors to a sumptuous office, which is appointed with a plush leather chair, a handsome desk, stuffed animal heads, and numerous cultural artifacts. You are greeted by a portly, jolly-looking man with a handlebar mustache, who is dressed in orange silk robes and is wearing far too much perfume and jewelry.

The man says, "Thank you all for coming. Your bravery is well known to the citizens of our town. As I'm sure you know, these are trying times and the citizens of Relkingham are worried about this edict that we're hearing about from Wyllea, as well as the violence and brigands reported in the land. We need respected heroes to speak with Founder Neelani and convince her of the problems with this new law. We would be more than happy to compensate you for the trip and any difficulties that might arise. We would be willing to offer 1,000 gold pieces if you will speak with her. We don't expect miracles and you will still be compensated if she doesn't listen, but success in this venture would be worth an additional reward."

Initial Negotiation: The Mayor **Level 3**
Skill Challenge XP 500

For the Mayor to increase your reward and smooth your bureaucratic journey to Founder Neelani, you need to convince him of your merit.

Complexity 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight.

Other Skill Streetwise.

Victory The mayor agrees to pay 1,500 gp instead of 1,000 gp and agrees to pay for any supplies, including horses, that the PCs require (no more than 200 gp a piece). The mayor also writes a glowing letter to the seneschal on the PCs' behalf, which allows them to be shown immediately into the throne room, instead of being made to wait in the antechamber. The letter also grants each PC a +1 bonus to the first Charisma-based skill check during the skill challenge with Founder Neelani. Check the success box for the meeting with the mayor.

Defeat The mayor does not pay for supplies or increase compensation. He also writes a lukewarm letter to the seneschal, which forces the PCs to wait in the antechamber. The letter causes each PC to begin the challenge with Founder Neelani with a –1 penalty to the first Charisma-based skill check. Check the failure box for the meeting with the mayor.

Bluff DC 10 (1 success). Two successes in a row reduce the DC of the next Diplomacy check by –3. The party fabricates reasons for the mayor to grant the party more money.

Diplomacy DC 15 (1 success, maximum 4 successes). One result of 20 or higher opens up Streetwise as an option or eliminates one failure.

The party discusses their past heroic deeds or describes the dangers of traveling both ways with brigands and cultists in the area.

Insight DC 16 (1 success, maximum 2 successes). One result of 20 or higher allows the group to understand that any Intimidate check results in automatic failure, and that Streetwise checks that appeal to the mayor's mercantile upbringing are likely to gain them a further advantage (the Mayor offers an item from his treasury to the PCs before they leave town). The party empathizes with the mayor and uses that knowledge to encourage a greater reward.

Streetwise DC 10 (0 successes). A failure here ruins the group's credibility; the group has a –4 penalty to Charisma-based checks until the end of the skill challenge. A success here causes the mayor to tell the PCs of secret tunnels that link many of the towns in Delornen and how they were once used by smugglers.

The group uses knowledge of the strategic importance of Relkingham and the gravity of the meeting with Founder Neelani to gain useful information that could help them later.

The Journey to Wyllea

After the meeting with the mayor, the PCs leave Relkingham to head toward Wyllea. The journey takes approximately three days. Each day, roll on the random encounter table. The PCs must have at least one random encounter before they reach Wyllea, so if they haven't rolled one by the third day, choose one from the list.

ROAD ENCOUNTERS

d%	Monsters Encountered
0–50	No encounter
51–55	3 human berserkers
56–60	1 ochre jelly, 3 orc raiders
61–65	8 human bandits
66–70	5 imps
71–75	3 goblin skullcleavers, 1 goblin hexer, 1 hobgoblin warcaster
76–80	3 pseudodragons and 2 spitting drakes
81–85	1 deathlock wight, 2 zombies, 8 zombie rotters, 1 skeleton, 1 gravehound
86–90	1 iron defender, 2 human guards, 1 human mage
91–95	2 kobold wyrmpriest, 6 kobold minions, 4 kobold slingers, 4 kobold dragonshields, 1 kobold slyblade
96–100	1 young white dragon

Following one or more random encounters, the PCs reach Wyllea, where they are met by the seneschal.

Part 2: Visiting the Palace

Once the PCs reach the palace, they can enter and meet with the seneschal.

Petitioning Founder Neelani

If the PCs were successful in the negotiation with the mayor, the seneschal leads them through the sitting room in Area 3b on the palace map to see Founder Neelani immediately.

Read the following if they were successful:

You are escorted into an opulent sitting room that is decorated in silk tapestries displaying the colors and shield of Delornen. An officious halfling with wire-rimmed spectacles greets you with a smile: "In his letter, the mayor of Relkingham speaks extremely highly of your valor and diplomatic skill. I will take you to see Founder Neelani at once."

If the PCs were unsuccessful in the challenge with the mayor, the seneschal is less pleasant and tells them to come back when they are summoned.
Read the following if the PCs failed:

You are escorted into an opulent sitting room that is decorated in silk tapestries displaying the colors and shield of Delornen. An officious halfling with wire-rimmed spectacles greets you with a forced smile: "In his letter, the mayor of Relkingham indicates that you would like to speak with Founder Neelani. She is a very busy woman and there is a long list of people who need to see her. You will be summoned when she is ready.

The seneschal summons the PCs about 24 hours later. When the seneschal escorts them in, **read the following when they are brought to Founder Neelani.**

You are led from the antechamber through a portcullis and into a landing. The landing is an irregularly shaped room with no ceiling. The wall opposite the portcullis is extremely tall and rounded at its edge. A steep and grand staircase leads from the landing to whatever sits at the top of the wall. The seneschal ascends the stairs, motioning for you to follow him.

Presuming that the PCs follow the seneschal, they are led up the staircase and announced. It is acceptable to distribute to the PCs the smaller map of just the throne room so that they can better picture their surroundings. The seneschal announces each PC by his or her full name, adding an appellation, such as "slayer of the white dragon Targoth" or "beloved servant of the Raven Queen." If the letter to the seneschal was positive, the appellation is also positive, which is the reason for the PCs' bonus to their first social roll with Founder Neelani. If the letter to the seneschal was lukewarm, the appellation is also lukewarm ("of Karholt" or "priest of the Raven Queen").

Regardless of the strength of the letter, **read the following when the PCs arrive at the top of the stairs:**

The halfling seneschal leads you under an open portcullis into an antechamber that is open to the sky above. Up the steep stairs, you see a hint of the dome of Delornen above and ahead of you, over what can only be the audience room. A guard in chainmail emblazoned with the symbol of Erathis escorts the seneschal and your party up the stairs, then steps behind you to stand guard.

After ascending the stairs, you stand in a wide oval-shaped throne room shielded by a great dome of stained glass, through which the dazzling sunlight filters in scintillating patterns. The chamber perches atop the palace like a hawk's aerie—between the pillars that hold up the dome, you can see the rolling hills and forests of Delornen extend off to the horizon.

Eight staircases—each warded by a guard in chainmail—lead down from the platformlike chamber, which is flanked by thick pillars. Long tapestries depicting scenes sacred to Erathis hang between the pillars from the edge of the dome, and they flap gently in the breeze.

A raised throne of gold-gilded wood and burgundy velvet stands at the center of the room, and upon this Founder Neelani sits. She wears a long gown of turquoise silk with gold and ruby accents. She sits upright but not stiffly, with the bearing of a great ruler. She has pale skin, ice blue eyes, and wears an amethyst chain circlet on her troubled brow. Lines of worry trace her eyes—perhaps she has slept little these last nights. Several attendants stand nearby, their faces obviously anxious.

As Founder Neelani beckons languidly, the seneschal proclaims, "Kneel before Founder Neelani."

Any character who refuses to kneel takes an additional -1 penalty to that character's first roll in the skill challenge. This skill challenge covers PC attempts to convince Founder Neelani to refuse the edict instating the sacrifice tariff. It also has the potential to grant the PCs a faster and less dangerous way out of the palace.

Negotiation: Founder Neelani **Level 3**
Skill Challenge XP 500

"Rise, my children," Founder Neelani says. "You are as welcome here as I am."

After you rise, she continues, "I have given much thought to the matter Relkingham has brought to my attention. It is a difficult question and one for which there might not be an easy answer. Nevertheless, I want to hear from each of you why you think this tariff should not be invoked."

As she speaks these words, the seneschal departs down the stairs from which you entered. The guard steps back into place at the peak of the stairs behind you.

She waits in turn for one of you to begin your petition. Now you need to convince Founder Neelani of the merit of the town's argument.

Complexity 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight.

Other Skill Religion.

Victory Founder Neelani immediately agrees that the sacrifice edict should not be invoked. When she is leaving, one of her maids tells the PCs of the secret tunnel that leads out of the palace from one of the landings in the kitchen. Check the success box for the meeting with Founder Neelani.

Defeat Founder Neelani tells the PCs that she will consider their request, and then she departs. The maid does not provide the PCs with any information. Check the failure box for the meeting with Founder Neelani.

Bluff DC 10 (1 success). Two successes in a row reduce the DC of the next Diplomacy check by -3. The group fabricates reasons that the sacrifice tariff would harm the land.

Diplomacy DC 15 (1 success, maximum 4 successes). One result of 20 or higher eliminates one failure. The group discusses the hardship and poor hospitality of forcing neighbors to sacrifice body parts and lives.

Insight DC 16 (1 success, maximum 2 successes). One result of 20 or higher allows the group to understand that any Intimidate check results in automatic failure, and that Religion checks are likely to gain them further information.
The party empathizes with Founder Neelani's difficulty in making this decision and discusses how it could impact the land.

Religion DC 10 (0 successes). A failure here ruins the group's credibility; the group has a -4 penalty to Religion and Bluff checks. A success here causes Founder Neelani to tell the PCs that she too has had such doubts, granting a +1 bonus to all future skill checks for that PC during the encounter
The party discusses Erathis's teachings, expressing how the god wouldn't want people to suffer in the pursuit of civilized trade.

If the PCs failed the skill challenge, they are led by the seneschal back into the antechamber to wait for Founder Neelani for several hours. If they succeed, she answers immediately. Whenever she answers, she says the following:

"I have given the matter much thought and believe you are right. The sacrifice tariff would impose too great a hardship on our neighbors, many of whom are also loyal servants of Erathis. I will have High Priest Vizier Avonathemon annul it. Thank you for your words on this matter."

If the PCs succeeded on the challenge, one of Founder Neelani's maids comes up to them.

A young half-elf maid who is a companion to Founder Neelani comes up to you and whispers, "If you would make haste, there is a secret door that runs between the kitchen and its antechamber." She points to the set of steps on the right-hand side of the north edge of the chamber. "A trapdoor in the kitchen closet leads to a tunnel that goes out of the town." She then runs off after Founder Neelani.

Why the maid helps the PCs is up to you. Perhaps she is grateful they have averted the sacrifice tariff, since her young brother is a victim of Vecnite activity. Perhaps she believes Founder Neelani is in danger from traitors in the palace (such as the guards).

Following Founder Neelani's departure, whether they failed or succeeded, and before they try to leave the throne room, they hear the seneschal cry out. Make sure to give at least a little time between the departure of the maid and the seneschal's cry.

"The vizier has taken the edict! He's going to invoke it on the altar in Relkingham! Ahhhhh!" The cry trails away into a gurgle.

This sound is accompanied by the creak of eight portcullises closing, sealing off the antechambers from the rest of the palace.

If the PCs attempt to find the seneschal by heading back down the stairs into area 3a, their way is blocked by one of the guards. The same is true if they try to leave by any of the other exits. There is no known chamber beneath the raised throne room, though a secret repository for the land's wealth is possible.

Palace Locations

Use the following descriptions when the PCs start exploring the palace (but adjust them as needed if you use them before they have spoken to Neelani).

Area 1: Throne Room

Read the following after the PCs visit the throne room.

After Founder Neelani leaves, you stand in the opulent throne room on a raised oval dais that is open to the daylight on all sides. Eight steep stairways, one in each eighth of the room, lead down into antechambers open to the sky. A domed stained glass skylight in the ceiling lets in colored rays of light, and the countryside extends around you to the horizon.

Read this next section only if the players ask about the possibility of leaping from the dais over the antechambers onto the surrounding roof (a valid escape):

There is a gap between the throne platform and the slightly sloped roof over the main rooms. One could clear the distance with a strong leap. If you fell, you would fall into one of the portcullis-sealed antechambers.

The roof of the palace is 30 feet from the ground. The roof is considered difficult terrain.

Area 2a and 2b: Antechamber and Sitting Room

Read the following if a PC gets past a guard.

The stairs lead back down to the landing through which the seneschal escorted you on your way to see Founder Neelani. The portcullis, which was raised before, is now lowered. A pool of blood spreads into the antechamber from under the portcullis.

If the PCs enter, they find the body of the slain halfling seneschal:

The seneschal's body lies on the ground face forward. Blood is seeping out of his severed left hand and from somewhere on his face. A lever in the corner has been pulled down.

If the PCs turn him over, read the following:

The seneschal's left eye has been crudely plucked out of his face, leaving a bleeding, gaping hole. Clutched in his right hand is a note that reads as follows: Avonathemon has absconded with the edict. He means to read it on the altar. He must be stopped!

The door leading out of the room is locked. If the PCs search even cursorily, they find a young messenger boy:

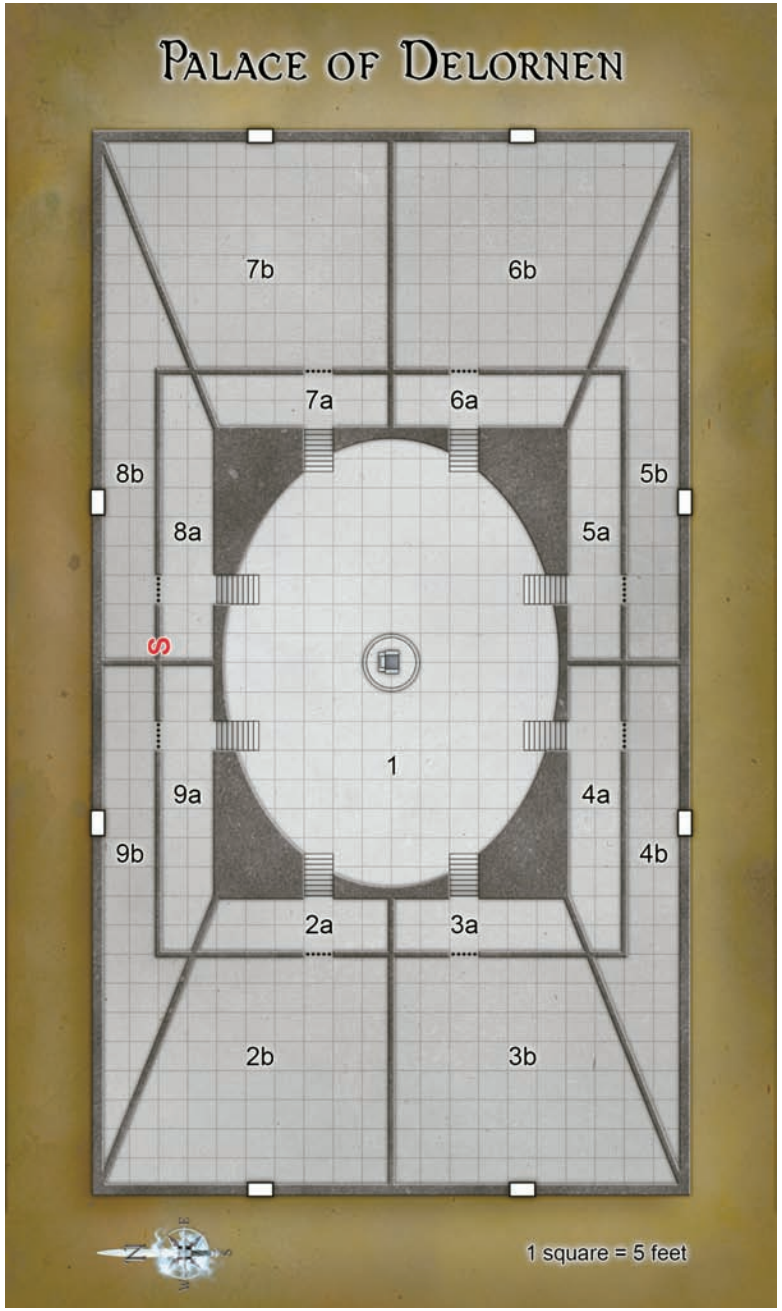
A young messenger boy's body has been unceremoniously dumped in the corner. He is covered in blood, his left hand has been severed, and his left eye has been plucked out.

Treasure: The room is decorated with expensive furniture, silver, and tapestries. The total value is about 5,000 gp, though only about 1,000 gp could be carried, at a total weight of 100 lb. Apportion the value of the treasure if a PC chooses to take some of it.

Area 3a and 3b: Antechamber and Meeting Room

Read the following if a PC gets past a guard.0

The stairs lead down to a landing similar to the one through which you entered on the way to the throne room. A portcullis bars the way into a lavish meeting chamber. The chamber is dominated by a massive, irregularly shaped cherry wood table with numerous chairs. It is sumptuously decorated, with tapestries, silver, and expensive furniture.



Treasure: The room is decorated with expensive furniture, silver, and tapestries. The total value is about 6,000 gp, though only about 800 gp could be carried, at a total weight of 200 lb. Apportion the value of the treasure if a PC chooses to take some of it.

Area 4a and 4b: Antechamber and Meditation Room

Read the following if a PC gets past a guard.

The stairs lead down to a landing similar to the one through which you entered on the way to the throne room. A portcullis bars the way into a small, austere garden and meditation chamber. It houses exotic plants from faraway lands, an elegantly arranged rock garden, and a bubbling central fountain.

Area 5a and 5b: Antechamber and Guestroom

Read the following if a PC gets past a guard.

The stairs lead down to a landing similar to the one through which you entered on the way to the throne room. A portcullis bars the way into a lavish guest bedchamber. It is sumptuously decorated, with tapestries, silver, and expensive furniture.

Treasure: The room is decorated with expensive furniture, silver, and tapestries. The total value is about 6,000 gp, though only about 1,200 gp could be carried, at a total weight of 300 lb. Apportion the value of the treasure if a PC chooses to take some, but not all of it.

Area 6a and 6b: Antechamber and Chapel

Read the following if a PC gets past a guard.

The stairs lead down to a landing similar to the one through which you entered on the way to the throne room. A portcullis bars the way into an ornate chapel to Erathis. It is fantastically decorated, with tapestries, silver, gems, and expensive furniture.

Treasure: The room is decorated with expensive furniture, silver, and tapestries. The total value is about 10,000 gp, though only about 1,500 gp could be carried, at a total weight of 700 lb. Apportion the value of the treasure if a PC chooses to take some of it.

Area 7a and 7b: Antechamber and Ballroom

Read the following if a PC gets past a guard.

The stairs lead down to a landing similar to the one through which you entered on the way to the throne room. A portcullis bars the way into a massive ballroom, which is lavishly appointed with tapestries, suits of armor and weapons, expensive furniture, gold, silver, and gems.

Treasure: The room is decorated with expensive furniture, silver, gold, gems, and tapestries. The total value is about 15,000 gp, though only about 1,900 gp could be carried, at a total weight of 900 lb. Apportion the value of the treasure if a PC chooses to take some of it.

Area 8a and 8b: Antechamber and Kitchen

Read the following if a PC gets past a guard.

The stairs lead down to a landing similar to the one through which you entered on the way to the throne room. A portcullis bars the way into the kitchen. A closet sits to the left of the portcullis.

The closet is locked, requiring a DC 18 Thievery check to open. Even an untrained eye notices that the floor of the closet is false.

The floor of the closet is false. Below it is a tunnel leading off below the palace. Torches lining the walls of the dank tunnel have been lit recently.

If the PCs don't open the closet, but instead pull up all the levers, read the following:

As you pull up the last lever, the doors of the palace open.

Escaping the Palace

Encounter Level 3 (900 XP)

Setup

Avonathemon has magically locked the eight doors leading out of the palace by pulling down levers in each of the outer rooms of the palace. To escape the palace, the PCs must locate the secret tunnel that can be found in a closet that can be opened from both landing 8a and room 8b, which is the kitchen.

All but two of the eight stairways leading out of the throne room are blocked by a guard. (Two guards left earlier to escort Founder Neelani out.) The guards do not respond to any questions or requests. They stand firm in front of their posts. The guards were hired by Avonathemon. (At least one of them can be a Vecnite convert, at your discretion.) They do not wish the PCs to escape, and are also not particularly loyal to the vizier.

Alternatively, the PCs can pull down levers in each of the outer rooms. This requires them to make DC 20 Strength checks to lift each portcullis, enter the room, and pull each lever up.

It's important that the battle not seem stationary. The guards should follow the PCs if they go exploring the rooms for an exit. It's possible to use these rooms to gain a tactical edge, both on the part of the guards and on the part of the PCs. The guards try to fight in groups if possible.

6 human guards (G)

6 Human Guards (G)		**Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid		XP 150 each
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +6	
HP 47; **Bloodied** 23		
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14		
Speed 5		
Halberd (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the human guard's next turn.		
Powerful Strike (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**		
Requires halberd; reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**		
Ranged 15/30; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.		
Alignment Any	**Languages** Common	
Skills Streetwise +7		
Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+3)	**Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3)	**Int** 10 (+1)	**Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment chainmail, halberd, crossbow with 20 bolts		

Tactics

If one of the guards is attacked, that guard responds with melee attacks. The other guards use their crossbows, or, if they are close enough, their halberds. The guards do not pursue the PC unless one of them somehow breaks past a guard down the stairs. At that point, the guards split up, some of them fighting the PCs and others pursuing those who have tried to escape.

The guards do not fight to the death unless Founder Neelani or Delornen is threatened. An individual guard who becomes bloodied parlays, revealing that they are acting on strict orders from the vizier. The guards do not pursue the PCs into the secret tunnel or out of the palace, so if they find the secret passage or pull up all the levers, they are safe to exit the palace.

It is possible to tumble over a guard down the stairs with a DC 22 Acrobatics check. This brings on pursuit as if the PC had attacked a guard.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The entire palace is well lit by ever-burning torches.

Portcullises: To lift a portcullis, a character must succeed on a DC 20 Strength check. Portcullises are found in all "b" rooms.

Lever: If one of the PCs examines the lever, allow a DC 18 Thievery check. Success indicates that the lever is one of many, all of which must be pulled up to unlock the doors to the palace. Each consecutive time a PC performs this check in a different room, the DC goes down by 1. Levers are found in all "b" rooms.

PART 2: BEYOND THE PALACE

If the PCs take the tunnels, they might encounter monsters. The tunnels connect to a number of tributary passages that lead to the Underdark. Roll three times.

The tunnel winds on, dripping with heavy water that leaves raised lumps of calcium where it concentrates. Occasionally, you hear the sounds of scrabbling feet in the darkness.

TUNNEL ENCOUNTERS

d%	Monsters Encountered
0-50	No Encounter
51-60	3 wererats and 2 shadowhunter bats
61-70	3 specters
71-80	3 dark creepers
81-90	3 cavern chokers
91-00	8 kruthik hatchlings, 2 kruthik adults

The tunnels eventually end in an opening in a small drainage ditch on the main road. If the PCs took the tunnels, they should not have any further random encounter on the road.

If the PCs escaped using a palace exit, read the following:

You make your way through the town toward the main road. As you leave the town, the enormity of your challenge lies before you. If Avonathemon swears the edict on the holy altar of Relkingham, it will ruin the lives of thousands of innocent people.

Once the PCs are out of the town, roll once on the Road Encounters table.

PART 3: HAMONA

The following area descriptions might be useful either during or after the skill challenge (see encounter T2). If referred to before the villagers change into undead creatures, adjust as needed.

Area 1: Streets

Read the following to remind the PCs of what the area looks like.

The seemingly deserted streets of the village have come to life with undead villagers, who are clamoring for your blood and your flesh. The rope bridge connecting the inn to the jail seems tantalizingly close, yet impossibly far.

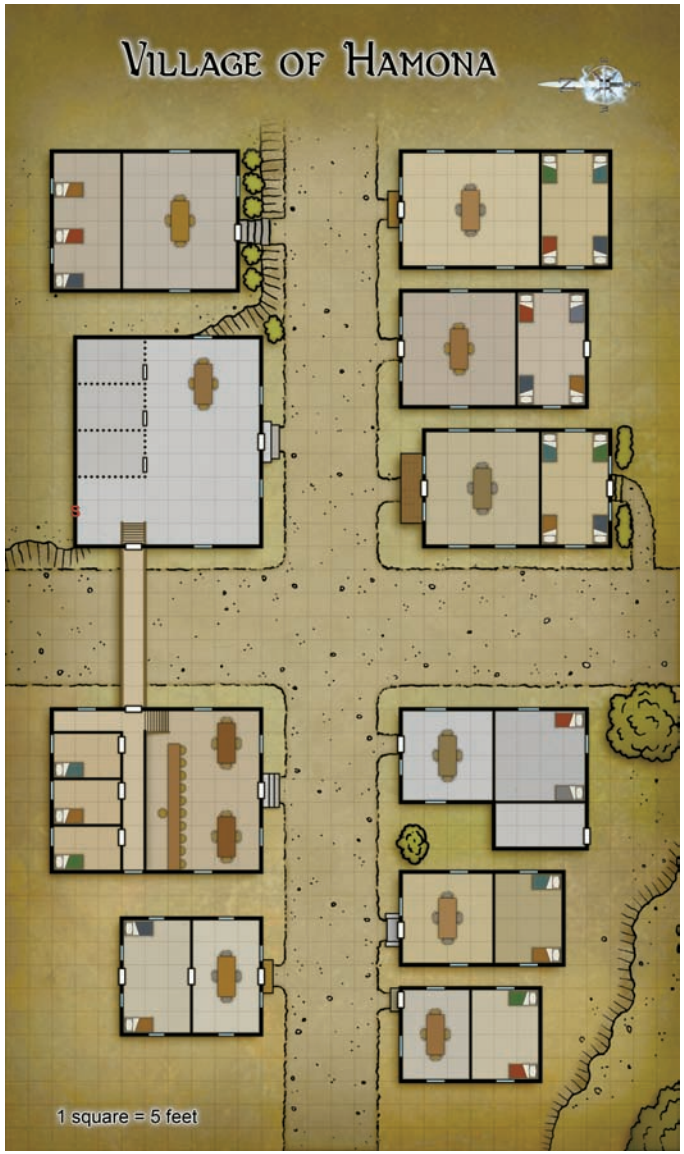
Area 2: Jail

Read the following if the PC unlocks the door.

A small, single story village jail opens from the door. Three barred cells sit unused. The rope bridge from the inn comes to an end at the jail's only window.

A DC 25 Thievery check is required to open the lock on the front door. A successful DC 22 Perception check is required to detect the secret door that leads to the tunnels out of the village. **If the PC finds the secret door and looks into it, read:**

You find a secret trapdoor that leads down into a tunnel.



Potential Villager Responses

Old Woman: You bring swords to chop off our limbs, and daggers to poke out our eyes. Get out! GET OUT!

Young Boy: Are you going to save us from the bad men?

Village Elder: How do we know we can trust you? You could be in league with . . . with "them."

Young Woman: They don't seem like the people who hurt us. We can trust them.

Wise Old Man: You must hurry before sundown—before it's too late.

Spinster: Look! There! One of them is trying to sneak into the jail!

Priest: Give us a sign that you serve the powers of light and good.

The rope bridge requires a successful DC 10 Acrobatics (balance) or Athletics (climb) check or the PC falls 15 feet, taking 1d10 + 3 damage. Falling automatically alerts the villagers. The PC can sneak to the other side of the bridge with a Stealth check opposed by the Perception of the villagers.

Area 3, 5–11: Homes

Read the following if a PC opens the unlocked door.

You open the door to find a simple one-room home. One half of the room is used for dining and cooking and the other half contains beds and personal belongings.

Each home contains 3d10 gp worth of personal belongings.

Area 4: The Inn

Read the following if a PC moves past the undead and enters the inn.

A typical well-worn inn spreads out from the door. Except for the reek of the undead, the inn is a strange bastion of calm. It has two large tables for meals and a number of barstools at the long bar. A short flight of stairs leads up to the rooms. You can see the rope bridge that leads to the jail at the top of the stairs.

At least half of the remaining undead try to follow the character into the inn if the PC hasn't somehow barricaded the door. Only undead with flesh can open the door, which precludes skeletons from doing so. Any undead can try to bash the door down by making a DC 20 Strength check.

If the PCs fight the undead and win, they can leave by the road or they can go through the tunnel. If they succeeded in the challenge, the villagers let them leave through the tunnel or road just in the nick of time.

Tragedy at Hamona

Encounter Level 3 (806 XP)

Setup

Whether the PCs took the tunnels or left by the village, they eventually make their way down the main road toward Relkingham. They arrive near Hamona about half an hour before dusk. **Read the following:**

Off the road, you hear a large number of crows squawking. The smell of rotting flesh drifts from somewhere nearby.

If the PCs investigate, they arrive at Hamona. **Read the following when they are entering the outskirts of the village:**

You come upon a seemingly deserted village. The entire village consists of an intersection of two roads. About eight two-story townhouses line both roads. On either side of the road leading north is a two-story inn and a one-story jail. Leading down from the inn to the jail is a short, but sturdy ladder-bridge. Crows are pecking at numerous piles of refuse. Closer examination reveals severed hands, fingers, and eyeballs. The smell of rotting flesh is unbearable, and you feel that you are being watched.

Pause for a few moments. Then continue:

The sense of being watched increases. Shutters open a crack. Windows are lifted an inch. Suddenly, an elderly woman appears for a moment in a second-story townhouse. She is covered from head to toe in black sackcloth.

If the PCs move to investigate or try to leave, people come out of the houses to intercept them.

Twenty villagers of all ages emerge from their homes. All are dressed from head to toe black sack cloth. They are congregating in front of the inn door, clearly wanting to prevent you from getting inside.

The villagers are extremely distrustful of outsiders and are terrified that the cultists of Vecna have come back to harm them further. The Vecnites surrounded the village, forcing each villager to submit to losing one hand and eye or die. They even blocked the secret trapdoor in the jail that would have allowed the villagers to escape.

Allow PCs to make DC 15 Perception checks to notice that each of the villagers is missing their left eyes and left hands. (You can decrease the difficulty as the PCs interact with the villagers.)

If the villagers are not convinced of the PCs truthfulness, they trap the PCs and then transform into undead creatures at sundown. If they are convinced, they show the PCs the secret door to a shortcut tunnel.

During the skill challenge, there are two possible actions PCs can take to circumvent the villagers and move to the secret door. Some of them could sneak to the jail and try to pick the lock, opening the door and finding the secret entrance to the tunnel. Alternatively, one of them could tumble past the crowd in front of the inn door, go up the stairs in the inn, walk through the skywalk to the jail, climb down to the floor, and enter the secret door. Neither of these is easy, but they are possible alternatives to dealing with the wary villagers.

12 zombie rotters (Z)
1 corruption corpse (C)
1 deathlock wight (W)

This skill challenge covers the PCs attempt to convince the villagers to let them go.

Distrustful Villagers	**Level 3**
Skill Challenge	XP 806

An old man comes forward, a distrustful look on his face. For the villagers to let you go and tell you what happened to them, you must convince them of your trustworthiness.

Complexity 5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills Diplomacy, Insight, Intimidate.

Other Skills Acrobatics, Stealth, Thievery.

Victory The villagers show the PCs the secret tunnel just in time and the PCs do not have to fight them. If the PCs don't fight the undead, check the success box.

Defeat The villagers turn into undead. If the PCs harm any of the undead, check the failure box under undead. This is because the Vecnites gain strength when their evil deeds cause others to harm innocents, even if it is necessary.

Diplomacy DC 15 (1 success). One result of 20 or higher eliminates one failure. The PCs discuss that they are on a mission to prevent another tragedy like what befell Hamona from occurring. They might say that they suspect the Vecnites of this treachery and are out to stop them before they hurt anyone else.

Insight DC 16 (1 success, maximum 6 successes). One result of 20 or higher allows the group to understand that any Bluff check results in automatic failure, or that Stealth checks might allow them to sneak and search for other ways out, or that Acrobatics checks might result in them getting past the villagers and into the inn.

The party empathizes with the loss felt by the villagers and their individual trauma.

Filth Fever	Level 3 Disease	Endurance stable DC 16, improve DC 21
The target is cured.	◀ **Initial Effect** The target loses 1 healing surge.	◀▶ The target takes a –2 penalty to AC, Fortitude defense, and Reflex defense.	▶ **Final State** The target takes a –2 penalty to AC, Fortitude defense, and Reflex defense. The target loses all healing surges and cannot regain hit points.

Intimidate DC 16 (1 success, maximum 2 successes). Additionally, a success on DC 20 allows the PCs to each gain a +1 bonus to their next checks. The PCs try to bully the villagers into letting them pass.

Acrobatics DC 10 (0 successes). When successful, the other PCs take a –1 penalty to social checks for them until the end of the encounter.

The PC tries to tumble or squeeze past the villagers and go up into the inn or leave.

Stealth DC 10 (0 successes). The PC uses Stealth to sneak off and look for another way out. After trying a number of doors and finding them open, but leading to nowhere of note, the PC stumbles onto a locked door.

Thievery DC 10 (0 successes). The PC opens the locked door to the jail and discovers the secret door to the tunnel.

If the PCs succeed in their skill challenge, continue to the section titled The Road to Relkingham. If they fail, they are attacked by the villagers, who turn into undead.

Read the following if they failed:

One by one, the villagers transform into horrible undead monstrosities. Most appear similar, with shambling gaits and rotting flesh, but two appear more powerful and more intelligent. One of these has a globule of rotting flesh in its remaining hand. The other, and most animate, has tendrils of eldritch energy running from its hand to its eyes. All seem ravenous for your flesh!

Tactics

If the villagers transform, they attack the PCs viciously, with little regard for their own safety. No vestige of their humanity during the day remains with them at night. The undead try to stop the PCs from opening the door to the inn by blocking it or bull rushing PCs away from it.

Corruption Corpse (C) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (undead) XP 175
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
Grave Stench aura 1; living enemies in the aura take a –5 penalty to attack rolls.
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23; see also *death burst*
Regeneration 5 (if the corruption corpse takes radiant damage, its regeneration doesn't function on its next turn)
AC 17; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 4
(+) **Slam** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.
↗ **Mote of Corruption** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
The corruption corpse hurls a black glob of necrotic filth. Ranged 10; +7 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).
✧ **Death Burst** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Necrotic**
The corruption corpse explodes. Close burst 1; +7 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 3 necrotic damage.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 4 (–1) **Cha** 3 (–2)

12 Zombie Rotters (Z) **Level 3 Minion**
Medium natural animate (undead) XP 38 each
Initiative –2 **Senses** Perception –1; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 9, **Will** 10
Immune disease, poison
Speed 4
(+) **Slam** (standard; at-will)
+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 6 (–2) **Wis** 8 (–1)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 1 (–5) **Cha** 3 (–4)

Deathlock Wight (W) **Level 4 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 175
Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +1; darkvision
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 6
(+) **Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 necrotic damage, and the target loses 1 healing surge.
↗ **Grave Bolt** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 20; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).
↗ **Reanimate** (minor; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
Ranged 10; affects a destroyed undead creature of a level no higher than the deathlock wight's level + 2; the target stands as a free action with a number of hit points equal to one-half its bloodied value.
✧ **Horrific Visage** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Fear**
Close blast 5; +7 vs. Will; 1d6 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +10, Religion +10
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 9 (+1)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 16 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+6)

Part 4: The Road to Relkingham

Regardless of how the PCs got out of Hamona, the road eventually passes by a burned-out schoolhouse. Tendrils of smoke can be seen for miles around coming from the schoolhouse. See encounter T3 for more information on what occurs before the group reaches Relkingham.

Vecnite Ambush

Encounter Level 3 (825 XP)

Setup

If the PCs left by the road, they continue on toward Relkingham. Roll once on the Road Encounters table. If the PCs left through the secret tunnel in the jail, roll once on Tunnel Encounters table.

3 Vecnite thugs (T)
1 cult berserker (B)
1 Vecnite mage (M)
1 dire rat (D)

They come upon a mostly charred, but still partially intact, schoolhouse. Its supports and overall structure are intact, but there are gaping holes in the floor and loose, smoldering beams that could fall down at any moment.

Read the following when they move near the building:

A few hundred feet from the road, you can see a burned-out schoolhouse, and some of its beams are still smoldering with dying flames. The building appears mostly intact, though it is probably not very stable.

If the PCs investigate around the building, read the following:

Parts of the schoolhouse floor appear to have caved in under the weight of falling beams. These holes descend about 10 feet to pits. The door of the schoolhouse is slightly ajar.

If all the PCs enter the building, the Vecnites ambush them. If after a while, only a few PCs enter, the Vecnites still conduct their ambush, but leave out one or two of their number to search for the other PCs.

When the PCs enter the schoolhouse, read the following:

Desks and chairs are overturned or smashed. Some have fallen into 10-foot deep pits in the floor. Roof beams are hanging down into the room, seeming ready to fall at any moment. There appear to be no other exits in the room.

Dire Rat (D)	Level 1 Brute
Medium natural beast	XP 100
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19	
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 11	
Immune filth fever (see below)	
Speed 6, climb 3	
⸸ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Disease**	
+4 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage, and the target contracts filth fever (see below).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Skills Stealth +7	
Str 14 (+2)	**Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 18 (+4)	**Int** 3 (-4) **Cha** 6 (-2)

3 Vecnite Thugs (T)	Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 125 each
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	
Speed 6	
⸸ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.	
⚚ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.	
⸸ **Dazing Strike** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires club; +4 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, the target is dazed until the end of the Vecnite thug's next turn, and the Vecnite thug shifts 1 square.	
Combat Advantage	
The Vecnite thug deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Alignment Any	**Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9	
Str 12 (+2)	**Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	**Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, club, 4 daggers	

Vecnite Mage (M)	Level 4 Artillery (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid	XP 175
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +5, low-light vision
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	
⸸ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+4 vs. AC; 1d4 damage.	
⚚ **Thunder Blast** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Thunder**	
Close blast 3; +8 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 5 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.	
⚚ **Lightning Arcs** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**	
The mage makes a separate attack against 3 different targets: Ranged 10; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 lightning damage.	
Alignment Any	**Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +11	
Str 10 (+2)	**Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 17 (+5)
Con 12 (+3)	**Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment robes, quarterstaff, wand	

Tactics

The Vecnites are prepared for a quick and brutal ambush, but don't want to stick around for a protracted battle. If the PCs start to gain the advantage in the battle, the Vecnites try to flee. If the PCs prevent the Vecnites from fleeing, check the success box under ambush. If any escape, check the failure box because the Vecnites flee to the cult and send aid to Avonathemon.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Sunlight comes through some of the boarded up windows, but the entire area is considered low-light unless the PCs pull out a light source. The Vecnites are all half-elves, so they have no difficulty with the lack of light.

Rough Terrain: Any square adjacent to a pit is considered rough terrain.

Part 5: Relkingham

After the group deals with the ambush, the remaining journey to Relkingham is short. Include a random encounter from the Road Encounters table if you think it's necessary. Otherwise, proceed to Relkingham.

When the PCs arrive, read the following:

As you approach Relkingham, you sense that something is amiss. When you move closer, you see a large crowd gathered in the town square opposite the temple.

When they are closer, read:

Sharona, a maiden known for her beauty and love of gossip, comes up to you and says, "Have you heard? The vizier has come to Relkingham on official business. Isn't it exciting!?" Giggling, she continues, "Apparently, he kicked all the priests out of the temple of Erathis and has locked himself in with his supporters from Wyllea. I think he's praying for a miracle from Erathis to end the drought. Oh, how did the petition to Founder Neelani go?"

The PCs can make small talk with Sharona or move on toward the temple. When the PCs approach the temple, they see that the priests have indeed been kicked out of the temple. Two of the senior priests are arguing over how to proceed. The conversation starts as follows, but adjust it as needed if the PCs decide to join in.

One priest, a grizzled man in his forties, says to another one who is about a decade older, "I can't stand for this anymore. Avonathemon has crossed a line. The sacrifice tariff must not go through. It is not what's best for our flock."

The older man looks thoughtful and says, "It is not our place to question the high priest, Father Bartok. He speaks for our lord and his word is the law."

Father Bartok opens his mouth to say something, then sees you. "Lads! You've returned!! What did Founder Neelani say? Did she listen to our petition?"

As he's speaking, the mayor rushes up to you, in a panic. "So what did she say? Did she agree with our arguments?"

The mayor is cut short by a massive explosion. Glass explodes from the roof of the temple as a column of darkness descends from the sky into the temple. All the townsfolk start rushing around in a panic, screaming, "Do something! The high priest is under attack!"

The high priest is not under attack. He is the source of the column, which represents Vecna's approval of the numerous sacrifices placed upon the altar.

The Temple in Relkingham

The following areas are in the temple. When the PCs enter the temple, they are in area 1. However, this information is secondary to the encounter that takes place here, so in most cases you might need to refer to encounter T4 before you read aloud any of the text below.

Area 1: Temple

If the PCs enter the next room, read:

The temple is a scene out of a nightmare. Previously, murals of peace and civilization decorated the walls. These are splattered with blood and gore. The numerous magic torches do little to lighten the room because of the column of darkness streaming from the hole in the ceiling down to the altar. The altar is pure black, with pulsing purple veins that beat in time with the column. Human body parts, especially eyes and hands, spill out from atop the altar. Some are being consumed in flames.

A ritual circle sits in the northwest corner of the room untouched, as does a ritual pool. A number of braziers barely add light to the dim temple.

Avonathemon is kneeling in supplication. He wears a black body-length robe with pulsing purple veins similar to those of the altar. He has significant bulk under the clothes from his physique and his chain armor. Hanging from his neck are both the armor symbol of Erathis and the severed hand and eye symbol of Vecna. He has both of his hands and eyes intact and is holding these out in a traditional prayer expression. A wide arc of floating severed hands and disembodied eyes surround him, seeming to protect him and to menace any who come near him. Sitting on the altar, pristine above the severed flesh, is the edict.

As you enter, his eyes flash upon you and he screams, "Keep them away from the edict!" He continues to chant rapidly as the guards and undead servitors charge you.

Depending on the results of the Event Success or Failure table, the guards rushing the PCs might be Vecnite thugs or cult berserkers. Whichever they are, there are two guards, one deathlock wight, and four zombie rotters.

If a PC touches the column of darkness, that PC is weakened (save ends). If the PC moves through it, that PC is stunned until the end of his or her next turn, falls (taking 1d10 damage), and is weakened (save ends).

Area 2: Communal Bedchamber

When they enter, read:

You enter into what looks like a communal bedchamber. Six beds are neatly made in the room, and everburning torches light each corner as well as the middle. Chests sit next to each bed. The door leading to the next room is closed, but it does not appear to be locked. Sounds of chanting are coming from the next room.

A DC 20 Perception check reveals droplets of blood leading from this room into the next.

Treasure: The chest contain a total of 500 gp and a number of ritual items sacred to .

Area 3: Storeroom

If the PCs enter the next room, read:

This is a small storeroom full of crates.

If the PCs open the crates, read:

The crates contain frankincense, myrrh, and other priestly ritual components.

Treasure: The PCs probably won't steal the temple's ritual components, but if they do, the components are worth about 500 gp.

Area 4: Office

If the PCs enter the next room, read:

This is a large and opulent office. Numerous books are housed on six tall bookcases, which surround a heavy desk covered in papers.

Treasure: The PCs probably won't steal the temple's documents and books, but if they wish to, the only value might be historical.

Area 5: Storeroom

If the PCs enter the next room, read:

This is a large storeroom with numerous barrels.

An investigation of the barrels reveals that they contain ale. A successful DC 20 Perception check reveals a secret trapdoor that leads into tunnels under the village.

Treasure: The ale is worth about 25 gp.

Area 6: Bedchamber

If the PCs enter the next room, read:

This is an opulent bedchamber, the back half of which is taken up by a massive bed. Three chests sit at the foot of the bed and a brazier sits near the door.

Treasure: The chest contains simple clerical vestments, personal effects, and other belongings of Father Porel.

Area 7: Meeting Room

If the PCs enter the next room, read:

This is a simple meeting room with a long, rectangular table surrounded by eight stools.

Nothing of particular interest is contained in this chamber.

Final Confrontation

Encounter Level 4 (927 XP or 1,179 XP)

Setup

At this point, it is likely that the PCs go to the temple to see what is causing the massive column of darkness that is streaming down into the temple. To determine the difficulty of the encounter with Avonathemon and his lackeys, consult the Event Success or Failure and Results tables.

Avonathemon (A)
2 Vecnite thugs or cult berserkers (T)
1 deathlock wight (D)
8 zombie rotters (R)

If the PCs investigate around the temple, read:

Despite the column of darkness, the rest of the temple seems untouched. There appears to be only one entrance on the side of the building.

If any of the PCs are from Relkingham, or are priests of Erathis, it's reasonable to give them an approximate layout of the building.

2 Vecnite Thugs (T) **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 125 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +1
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18
AC 16; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12
Speed 6

Club (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.

Dazing Strike (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires club; +4 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, the target is dazed until the end of the Vecnite thug's next turn, and the Vecnite thug shifts 1 square.

Combat Advantage
The Vecnite thug deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)
Equipment leather armor, club, 4 daggers

2 Cult Berserker (T) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *battle fury*
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14
Speed 7

Greataxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC; 1d12 + 4 damage (crit 1d12 + 16).

Battle Fury (free, when first bloodied; encounter)
The cult berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit.

Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +5 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +9, Endurance +9
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 12 (+3)
Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 2 handaxes

Deathlock Wight (D) **Level 4 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 175

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +1; darkvision
HP 54; **Bloodied** 27
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed 6

Claw (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 necrotic damage, and the target loses 1 healing surge.

Grave Bolt (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 20; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Reanimate (minor; encounter) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
Ranged 10; affects a destroyed undead creature of a level no higher than the deathlock wight's level + 2; the target stands as a free action with a number of hit points equal to one-half its bloodied value.

Horrific Visage (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Fear**
Close blast 5; +7 vs. Will; 1d6 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

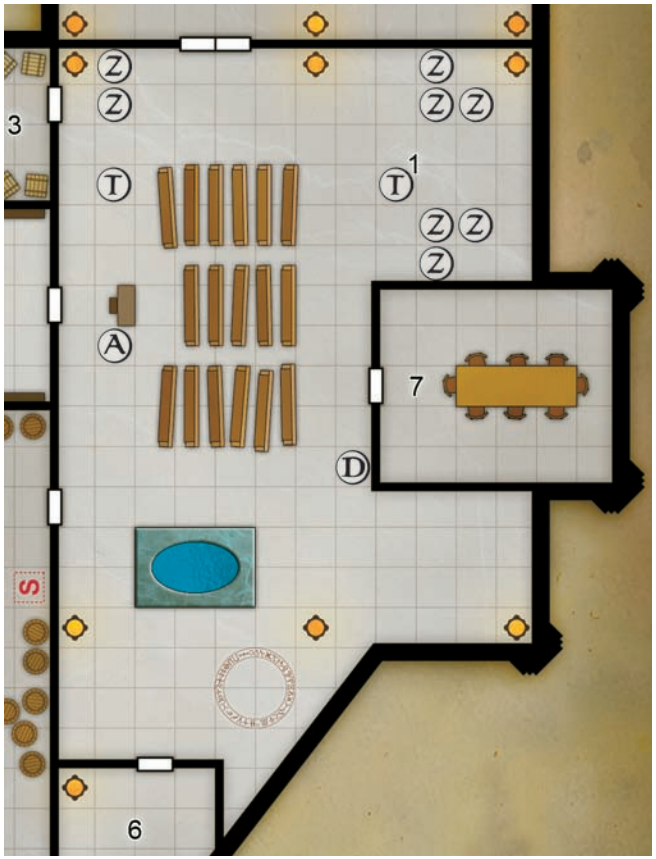
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +10, Religion +10
Str 10 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 9 (+1)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 16 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+6)

8 Zombie Rotters (Z) **Level 3 Minion**
Medium natural animate (undead) XP 38 each

Initiative -2 **Senses** Perception -1; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 9, **Will** 10
Immune disease, poison
Speed 4

Slam (standard; at-will)
+6 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 6 (-2) **Wis** 8 (-1)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 1 (-5) **Cha** 3 (-4)



Avonathemon	**Level 4 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +13
Ring of Hands aura 5; creatures in the aura cannot regain hit points. Undead in the aura gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and defenses.	
HP 110; **Bloodied** 55	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 21	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 5	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 plus 1d6 necrotic damage	
✧ **Death Bolt** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 10; +8 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 6 necrotic damage and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
✧ **Hurl into Darkness** (minor; encounter) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 10; +8 vs. Will; 3d6 + 6 necrotic damage and the character teleports into the column of darkness that is streaming down on the altar. The character is stunned until the end of Avonathemon's next turn and weakened (save ends). Afterward, the character falls to the floor next to the altar, taking 1d10 falling damage.	
⊕ **Touch of Corruption** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃)	
+8 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends).	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +10, Insight +12, Intimidate +10, Religion +9	
Str 16 (+5)	**Dex** 11 (+2) **Wis** 20 (+7)
Con 15 (+4)	**Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+5)
Equipment chain mail, dagger, holy symbol, cloak, scroll of Speak with Dead, scroll of Detect Secret Doors	

Tactics

Avonathemon prefers to let the guards and undead take care of the PCs. In the beginning, he relies on his ranged attacks, trying to neutralize PCs temporarily by hurling them into the column. If the PCs move close, he starts to use his touch of corruption. If that doesn't recharge, he strikes with his dagger.

Avonathemon doesn't intend to surrender. He fights until either the PCs are dead or he is.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Everburning torches flicker along the walls, but because of the area's current conditions, only dim light is available.

Doors: None of the doors, including the front door to the communal bedchamber, are locked.

Walls: The DC to climb the inner and outer walls is 20. The walls have easy handholds.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs defeat Avonathemon, the edict never gets instated. He is too occupied during the battle to finish the chant to invoke the edict. If he defeats the PCs, the edict is invoked and he can claim that the PCs were responsible for the column or that he drove the responsible party off.

If the PCs are successful, Relkingham's drought ceases and the town throws them a banquet and a parade, attended by the mayor and Founder Neelani. Investigations are begun about the Vecnites and this might lead to further adventurers in Delornen where the PCs try to root out the cult.

The mayor is likely to provide an additional reward. You might choose for him to give more money or to entertain requests of the PCs, based on the type of campaign you are running.

About the Author

Eytan Bernstein hails from exotic Long Island and spends his days writing and editing projects for numerous game companies. In addition to his work on *Dragons of Faerûn*, *Adventurer's Vault*, and numerous other projects, Eytan serves as a partner and PR and Marketing Manager for Silven Publishing. Eytan enjoys hunting for gems and minerals in rock quarries, studying religion and theology, composing music, and playing with his many pets. For more information about Eytan, check out www.eytanbernstein.com.

The Idea File

BY JAMES WYATT

It has taken me a lot longer to actually start running the Greenbrier campaign than I ever expected, largely because it's taking me much longer to finish the last novel in my **Eberron** trilogy than anyone would have hoped. So this month I'm going to take a bit of a break from developing that campaign and talk about the things in my idea file—all the *other* campaigns I want to run, the games I'd be running if I lived in an alternate universe where I had nothing but time. In the course of looking at those ideas, though, we'll see why keeping a file of them is such a good idea—because there's no such thing as a wasted idea.

Eberron

It might not be fair to call this one part of the idea file, because it's part of my day job—I have been working (off and on) on the **Eberron** products due for release in 2009. But my last major campaign was an **Eberron** game, which started with the adventure that appeared in this magazine as "The Queen with Burning Eyes" and turned into a series of quests searching for the Regalia of Good and the Regalia of Evil, powerful artifacts dating from the ancient war between dragons and fiends.

Working on **Eberron** has, I think, also prompted David Noonan to start reminding me, occasionally, that his character from that campaign is still trapped under a glacier near the Frostfell, because the campaign ended a little precipitously and Dave missed the last session.

I don't really have much interest in reviving that campaign. But it does have me thinking about a couple of interesting things I might be able to incorporate into the Greenbrier campaign:

Gatekeepers: I'm already planning to use something like the Gatekeeper druids of **Eberron** in the Greenbrier campaign, and now that the *Campaign Guide* is in development, I have some concrete information I can use for Gatekeepers that appear in my game or for PCs who want to join their illustrious ranks.

Villains as Monsters: One of the less obvious beauties of 4th Edition is that it treats humans that aren't PCs as monsters by default. That means that when we wanted to define, say, the Ashbound druidic sect as a villainous organization in **Eberron**, we could provide the DM with statistics blocks for members of the Ashbound sect that are constructed as monsters and have unique powers to fit their Ashbound flavor. In 3rd Edition, we designed Ashbound feats and gave them to NPC druids so they could work just like PCs who join the Ashbound, but now PCs and NPCs just use different rules, and we can build a monster that says Ashbound from the ground up.

The point of that is that I can do the same thing for villainous organizations in my Greenbrier campaign—which, now that I think about it, are sort of missing from the little setting I've created. I talked about anti-aberration organizations drawn from the 3rd Edition *Lords of Madness* sourcebook, but no real villainous groups, no Society for the Promotion of Aberrant Monstrosities. I should add such a group,

something like **Eberron**'s Cults of the Dragon Below that worship aberrant beings and all too often get turned into something no longer human.

When I do that, I'll be able to create interesting and unique stat blocks for them, just like we did for the Ashbound.

Aberrant Beasties: The time that I and others have spent with the **Eberron** books lately also gave me some low-level aberrant monsters I can use to populate Greenbrier Chasm—dolgrims and dolgaunts, which appear in the **Eberron** conversion for adventure H1: *Keep on the Shadowfell*.

The Prophecy: One of the themes we decided to emphasize a little more in the 4th Edition incarnation of **Eberron** is the Draconic Prophecy. I like the idea of grounding the characters in a Prophecy that might point them toward their epic destinies even at 1st level, and perhaps I'll incorporate that into my PCs' first foray into Greenbrier Chasm.

Swords & Sorcery

I recently read a collection of J. Gregory Keyes' Fool Wolf stories, most of which originally appeared in the pages of *Dragon* magazine. (It's called *The Hounds of Ash and Other Tales,* and I recommend it highly.) These stories have a very old-school, pulp, swords-and-sorcery feel to them—Fool Wolf is a barbarian scoundrel with a certain family resemblance to Conan or Fafhrd. There's an ancient Near Eastern feel to the world, and it employs the old-school fantasy tropes of evil sorcerers and powerful demons, misguided paladins, and heroic if not particularly virtuous barbarians.

So that got me thinking about how easy it would be to run a 4th Edition campaign where all the characters used the martial power source. Two fighters, a rogue, a ranger, and a warlord don't cover all the party roles, but they're lacking only a controller, which is not an insurmountable obstacle. Such a party—perhaps even made up entirely of humans—could face off against evil wizards, cultic priests of serpent gods, and the horrible monsters the villains knowingly or unwittingly unleash upon the world, and never themselves cast a spell or employ a ritual.

Rituals: An additional wrinkle, which is where this gets useful for Greenbrier, is that the ritual system in 4th Edition is perfect for modeling the kind of magic you see in Robert E. Howard's Conan stories or H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu tales. Characters in this campaign might run across ritual scrolls that offer significant power—at a horrible cost.

Conan faces horrible monster-gods and emerges triumphant. That's what I want for my game.

Here I would draw on the *Call of Cthulhu* game for inspiration, but this kind of campaign appeals to me much more than *Call of Cthulhu.* Lovecraft and Howard had a lot in common, but where the horror of Lovecraft is fundamentally bleak (and *Call of Cthulhu* seems to end, inevitably, with the party of investigators either dead or insane), Howard's fantasy is optimistic and heroic. Conan faces horrible monster-gods and emerges triumphant. That's what I want for my game.

Perhaps the cult of aberration-worshipers makes use of these forbidden rituals, which the PCs might be tempted by. Certainly when the characters prepare for their final confrontation with the fiery being that escaped from Greenbrier Chasm, they should feel very much like they're confronting a dark god right out of the pages of Lovecraft or Howard.

World of Warcraft

As Blizzard Entertainment gears up for the release of the next expansion to **World of Warcraft**, they have caught the attention of one lapsed player in my household: my 11-year-old son.

A couple of weeks ago, he started suggesting that we renew our WoW subscriptions and start playing again. (We played together for about a year, then drifted away—mostly into D&D, where he could customize his character however he wanted, design his own powers, and so on.) We finally did so the other night, but in the interim we played D&D with **World of Warcraft** characters and monsters.

He made a draenei death knight (loosely based on the paladin class, with dragonborn ability score adjustments and a racial power a lot like the Tide of Melora feat), while my character was a night elf priest (the Devoted Cleric build pretty much straight, using elf statistics but with a stealthy racial power instead of Elven Accuracy).

I am not immersed in **Warcraft** lore, but I enjoy the world and think it could be a really fun setting for a tabletop roleplaying campaign. Mostly, I think, I like the monsters. So when it came time to put our characters through a couple of encounters, I had a lot of fun adapting D&D monsters to fit in WoW monster skins. I was trying to move quickly, so mostly what I did was find monsters in the *Monster Manual* that were the right

level and role for the monster I wanted to make, and filed off the serial numbers.

I'm not sure how relevant this is to my Greenbrier campaign, but there's at least some chance that characters will encounter murlocs and nagas at some point in the course of the campaign. In fact, it's not entirely outside the realm of possibility to steal blatantly from WoW and use nagas and satyrs within Greenbrier Chasm as corrupted version of the elves who used to live in the forest above and around it. I'm not sure I'll go that far, but the monsters are cool enough to make me seriously consider it.

In fact, it's not entirely outside the realm of possibility to steal blatantly from WoW

Gamma World

Another idiosyncracy of my son's gaming habits: He loves the mutation rules from the **d20 Future** book (part of the **d20 Modern** game line), which ultimately trace their ancestry back to the **Gamma World** game. He got me thinking about mutations one day, and I sat down with a pad of paper and sketched out how I could build a **Gamma World** game within the 4th Edition structure of character powers. The answer was actually pretty elegant. Within a week I had committed to run a sort of playtest of the system at a local gaming event that took place at the beginning of September.

I dug out my old **Gamma World** boxed sets (I have the original, from 1978, and the second edition from 1983) and referenced the **Alternity** setting version of **Gamma World** (published in 2000) for a more modern perspective. I based the adventure I ran on the sample adventure, "Rite of Passage," from the 1983 boxed set. I ended up using **Dreamblade** miniatures for all the characters and monsters, which meant that the monsters in particular paid very little homage to **Gamma Worlds** past. The characters did include a dabber (a mutated raccoon), though—the Twilight Scout figure from **Dreamblade** set 1.

When we started playing, one of the players commented that the life leech mutation had never been balanced in six editions of **Gamma World**. Well, when the life leech mutation actually consists of the at-will power *localized leech field* (which is the warlock's at-will *dire radiance,* but with necrotic damage), the encounter power *vampiric embrace* (warlock 1), and a daily power based on *beacon of hope* (cleric 1), it turns out to be a pretty balanced mutation.

Wacky Characters: As I think about what I can take from my **Gamma World** ideas to enrich and inform my Greenbrier campaign, the one thing that sticks in my head is the character with no face. Using **Dreamblade** miniatures meant I had to stretch to find figures that looked reasonably human without looking too 21st-century. That's why the character with the life leech mutation was the Greenlife Dryad, and the psychic character was the Faceless Stalker. When I wrote up the Faceless Stalker's character sheet, I noted that she could see normally, thanks to her psychic mutations. I didn't say anything about how she ate or spoke, and it only came up in passing during the game.

I think we DMs shouldn't be afraid to let characters be pretty out there in appearance or capabilities. By definition, player characters are special, and the story of the game can be a lot richer if they're clearly marked as special, for all too see. Imagine a wizard character who always wore a hooded robe, because she had no face—or a face that was clearly inhuman (despite the human entry in the race blank on her character sheet). You can say that arcane power gives her the capability to see as well as other characters do. She could spend a feat on Skill Training (Perception) or Skill Focus (Perception) to reflect that her arcane sight is actually better than normal human sight. She might take Blind-Fighting as her first paragon feat. Suddenly this is a character who really comes vividly to life—on the character sheet as well as at the table.

More Wacky Monsters: Can you identify the monsters from the *Monster Manual* that provided the basis for these monster statistics blocks?

Ardent Zungar		**Level 2 Brute**
Medium mutated plant		XP 125
Initiative +4	**Senses** Perception +1; low-light vision	
Toxic Spores aura 1; an enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 2 poison damage		
HP 43; **Bloodied** 21		
AC 15; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 11		
Speed 8		
⨁ **Club** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** +5 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.		
Str 15 (+3)	**Dex** 16 (+4)	**Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	**Int** 4 (-2)	**Cha** 6 (-1)

http://www.wizards.com/dreamblade/images/dbm_base_gallery/Ardent-Zungar.jpg

Zungar Standardbearer	**Level 4 Brute (Leader)**
Medium mutated plant	XP 175
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +4; low-light vision
Toxic Spores aura 1; an enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 2 poison damage	
HP 67; **Bloodied** 33	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13	
Speed 6	
(+) **Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.	
Spore Burst (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Poison**	
Close burst 3; +5 vs. Fort; 1d8 + 4 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both). Allies in the burst heal 5 hit points.	
Str 17 (+5)	**Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 17 (+5)	**Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+1)

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Drakesnail	**Level 3 Elite Lurker**
Large mutated animal	XP 300
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	
Speed 4	
(+) **Bite** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage.	
Twin Bite (standard; recharges when the drakesnail uses *shell game*)	
The drakesnail makes two bite attacks. If both attacks hit the same creature, the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Threatening Reach	
The drakesnail can make opportunity attacks against any creature within its reach.	
Shell Game (standard; at-will)	
The drakesnail retreats into its shell and gains resist 15 to all damage, regeneration 2, and tremorsense 10. It loses all other senses and can take no actions in its shell other than emerge (as a minor action)	
Str 18 (+5)	**Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 16 (+4)	**Int** 4 (-2) **Cha** 8 (+0)

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The ardent zungar is a kruthik young. All I did was change its size and type, remove its tremorsense and special movement modes, added poison to its aura damage, and change its claw to a club.

The zungar standardbearer is a kruthik adult, with the same changes. I made it a leader (after all, it's carrying a standard) by adding a healing ability to the kruthik's toxic spikes.

The drakesnail was actually a little more complicated. I started with the imp's statistics, but made it elite. Then instead of the imp's invisibility, I gave it an ability akin to the gargoyle's *stone form*. I gave it *threatening reach* to help make it act like an elite monster.

I threw these monsters together quickly for a wacky **Gamma World** game, but they will fit nicely into the environment of Greenbrier Chasm, where the aberrant corruption known as the Depravation warps plants and animals into mockeries of nature. And when I put a **Dreamblade** miniature down on the table, my players won't know what to make of it!

There you have it, a detailed look inside my Idea File. I know I'm lucky: Even though I don't have time to run a campaign right now, I play a lot of D&D, and I have the opportunity to flesh these ideas out into something that will become useful down the line.

Even if all your effort right now is dedicated to building your campaign, though, keep notes on your other ideas! When your creative well runs dry, you'll be surprised what can turn out to be useful from your stockpile of other ideas. ⚔

About the Author

James Wyatt is the Lead Story Designer for D&D and one of the lead designers of D&D 4th Edition. In over seven years at Wizards of the Coast, he has authored or co-authored award-winning adventures and settings including the Eberron *Campaign Setting*, *City of the Spider Queen*, and *Oriental Adventures*. His more recent works include *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*, *Cormyr: The Tearing of the Weave*, and *The Forge of War*. His third Eberron novel, *Dragon Forge*, was released in 2008.

Let Player's Manage Themselves Part 2

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND

When you're the Dungeon Master, you're going to wear a lot of hats. You're going to be the creator of a world, the architect of numerous dungeons, and the strategic mastermind behind countless encounters. Those are the fun hats. Those are the creative hats. Those are game hats. Less fun, less creative, and seemingly having nothing to do with the game, you are also going to be thrust in the roll of manager for a group of people that come to your house to play each week. For better or worse, the DM also tends to be the leader of the group—a leader who often hosts the games, organizes the schedule, and has to act is arbitrator for every small problem that comes up.

It's not fair, I tell you. And there are ways that you can get your fellow players to shoulder most, if not all of the burden, by letting them manage themselves.

Last month I outlined what I consider the four main and tedious concerns when it comes to managing your players. They were:

- Player attendance (and how to deal with absence)
- Player materials
- Player information and planning
- Player relationships

This was followed by advice on how to let players manage themselves when it came to attendance and tracking their materials. This month, I'm picking up where I left off. I saved the last two for later, because they are more complicated, more nuanced that the first two. Attendance is all about tough love, creating contingencies against absenteeism, and letting the show go on when there are minor attendance hiccups. Player material management is as easy as creating back-ups and material repositories near the place you play. These solutions are simple, straight-forward, and some what intuitive, though they take a little bit of backbone to implement. The two remaining concerns are not as simple.

As I sat down to write this month's column, my plan was to cover the last two points in a single column, but as I began to write, I realized that both concepts need more space than that. So before I tackle the perilous topic of managing player relationships, we'll spend this month exploring managing player information and planning.

Just the Facts, Ma'am, Just the Facts

When it comes to managing player information, brevity is the soul of wit. Players gain game information in game by two methods. The first is what you explicitly tell them. The second is from what they can pry out of you after you're done.

It's always better to be tight and concise in your initial descriptions. Highlight the parts that are most important to the scene or encounter, skipping extraneous world- or scene-building descriptions. I know that some of you are cringing at this. After all, it's great fun to craft eloquent prose to bring an encounter or roleplaying scene to life. But often that work is wasted on the tin ears of players who are far more concerned with the havoc they're about to wreak on the scene than the fine details of the frescos or the origin of the ornate desk that sits in the corner of the room. When you are overly descriptive, your players take a passive role. Players hate taking a passive role. Their eyes gloss over, they start reading comic books or playing their DS, or they wonder what other snacks you have in the fridge. Dungeons & Dragons is a game about active imagination. While you're the only source for information describing what a character sees, a part of every D&D player wants to color the scene himself. An active imagination wants to poke, prod, discover, and dissect on its own. Instead of fighting against this tendency, accept it and use it.

By giving a brief description, you make your players hunger for more. With a brief description you can focus that hunger on points that are important to the encounter or the plot. If you overload them with too much description, players will start to poke and prod in too many different directions, and you will soon find yourself struggling to keep up with the deluge of queries.

You may find this information dissemination tactic oddly familiar. You'll find many examples of this

tactic in published D&D adventures. For example, let's take a look at the first encounter, "On the Road: Kobold Brigands" from *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell*.

The wind in your face is cool and comfortable. The road beneath your feet is level. An occasional ancient cobblestone peeks through the dirt road, indicating decades of neglect. You notice footprints leading up and down the road, many of which were made by small, clawed feet.

In three simple sentences the introductory read-aloud text allows you to create a scene and focus the players on some suspicious tracks on the road, as well as present some foreshadowing (a fight with some small, clawed feet critters—namely, kobolds). If you take a closer look at that encounter, there's a lot more going on all around the PCs. The site of the upcoming battle has boulders, foliage, rock outcroppings, and even gravestones. The encounter itself takes place on the King's Road that winds its way through the Garlbury Downs, toward the village of Winterhaven. But the flavor text, coreectly, does not try to illuminate the entire scene or the entire background. It allows the players to explore by asking questions.

This is not only important because it gives players an active role in the game. It also takes a good chunk of player information management out of your hands. Except for the simple and basic facts, with maybe the slightest hint of flourish, you don't have to script much, which is great. This reduces the amount of information you give at the start of the encounter or scene, and reduces the work you have to do before the game. Oh, and it also gets the action started sooner. This is always, always (did I mention always) a good thing.

Heroes Tell Better Stories

Letting players take the information lead is not only a good idea when it comes to encounters. It's also a good idea when it comes to telling the campaign story.

At the start of each of my games, I give a couple of sentences that sum up what happened in the previous session. These sentences are as brief as they can be, and serve a single purpose—getting player conversation started.

After a week of real life, players need a few minutes to sweep the cobwebs out of the D&D wing of their memory mansion. That work is best done as a group.

After a week of real life, players need a few minutes to sweep the cobwebs out of the D&D wing of their memory mansion. That work is best done as a group. When you allow the sum up to be a conversation rather than a narrative, the players will start riffing off of each other's perspectives of the last session as they strive to gain focus on previous events. It's no secret that different players have different motivations while playing, and those motivations also inform what that player will remember in vivid detail from past games. This sharing of storytelling and bringing the past game into focus might seem disjointed and jumbled, but it serves a greater purpose. It gets your players participating early. Think of it as a warm-up stretch to the forthcoming session.

The truth is, when a DM talks about his game, it tends to sound like a dry history book. When a player talks about the game she's playing in, it sounds like a heroic adventure (at least to her own ears). Now while I love to snuggle up next to history books on rainy weekends, I also know I'm in the minority. My audience is there to revel in their own adventure epic. They might think it's neat that the actions of ancient empires have moved them in some way toward the Ruins of the Oehinn to fight the mysterious goals of the Hidden Warlord, but that is secondary to the fact they have to defeat the undead that haunt that place in order to find Lysander's father and the lost spells of Rassillian hidden in its vaults. Those goals are immediate. They're personal. And they involve kicking ass and taking names in the here and now!

This form of collaborative storytelling doesn't just work with the opening crawl. Right now, I run for two players who are crafting character journal entries for the campaign blog site. Each journal tells roughly the same story, but seen from very different points of view. I'm finding that it's great fun to read the story we're crafting (or at least carefully manipulating) find new and refreshing voices. The embellishments that each of these players have added have created new detail and depth to the game. For example, one player, while writing his family history, created a mercenary company that his parents used to run. I ran with that, and that company, and its current members, have become a force in the campaign.

Be a Lurker, But Not a Jerk

I think it is the goal of every DM to create the plausible illusion that their D&D world is real. Now, real is a loaded term. For our purposes, I mean real in a literary sense...plausible, believable, and both big in scope and immediate in presentation. In short, not fake. It's an impossible task to create an entire world and drop players into it. Eventually, you will react to what the players want to do rather than what you have planned. If you've been reading this column for a while, you know I'm a proponent of doing that early

and often, but here's the rub—you need to keep constant tabs on what your players want.

Part of doing this involves knowing what kind of players you have around the table (see *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 8 for some simple tricks to categorize and engage your players). Another way to figure out what your players want is to get them to make and communicate decisions about in-game choices.

A campaign blog or an email list is extremely helpful in this regard. Players who are engaged in the game will spend whatever free time they can scrounge talking about it to one another. They will work puzzles out, have arguments, and ultimately make decisions. A blog or something similar allows you to listen in on those conversations and pick up key hints on what the players want to do and explore in your world. The trick here is to make sure you never use that information to screw over the players. If the PCs come up with a clever way to get into the castle that you didn't anticipate, fight the tendency to shore up that loophole to get your players to do "what you planned." Never squash good and fun ideas just because they weren't yours. Lurking in this way, allowing player conversation and desire to help craft your game, also decreases your adventure prep time since you're not spending your time trying to close loopholes. You also avoid an adversarial relationship between you and your players, which might motivate them to not want to share their plans with you. If you close enough doors on them based on eavesdropping on their blog or email conversations, they will figure it out and either shut you out of future conversations or, worse yet, cease having them altogether. Create challenging fun rather than frustrating challenges with the information you glean, and your players will trust you with all their desires and plans.

The Mail Bag

Save My Game really isn't a column about rules questions, it's a column about solving problems that happen at and around the game table. At the same times, in D&D, there is often a thin line between rules issues and game issues. This month, I am going to answer some rules-like (or rules-lite) questions, but don't confuse these answers with updates or errata. They are suggestions to help you handle rules issues rather than any official rule of the game.

But before we get on to those, I want to share an email I received in the last month about the column "Saying Yes Is a Skill."

If you take anything away from Save My Game, it should be this: When you run a D&D game, your chief job is to help create heroic fantasy fun for your players and yourself.

It Works!

Hello. This is my first time writing a letter to your magazine, but after running my D&D session this evening and reading the article "Saying Yes Is a Skill," I had to relate my experience. During a combat encounter with some kobolds, the ranger in the party noticed a hidden trap in the middle of the room (she has a passive Perception of 20). I had modified this trap from the DMG *to only trigger if Medium or larger creatures stepped on it, so that the kobolds could stand on it and then run away, tricking the PCs into falling into the pit. Obviously, knowing it was there, the party just avoided it. Anyway, late in the combat, a situation arose where a kobold was standing on the trap floor and the party wizard asked if he could target the trap with a spell so as to destroy it and thereby send the hapless kobold to an unexpected end. While I knew that the rules allowed for certain traps to be destroyed with attacks, I also knew that the rules did not explicitly cover the situation for pit traps. That being the case, there was a time when I would have ruled against the player's idea simply because I tended to let my decisions fall on the side of what was written in the rulebooks.*

This time, however, was different. Perhaps because I was riding high on the new edition, and because I have made my new philosophy, "When in Doubt, Make it Fun" I decided to allow this action. (If, of course, his attack could beat the trap's defense of 15—no point in just giving it away.) Needless to say, the trick worked, and the kobold fell to an untimely demise. Most importantly, though, was the look that quickly spread around my gaming table. It was a look that conveyed the wonder of playing a game that finally delivers on the promise of "your imagination is the only limit." Although I'm sure that they attributed this new direction of the game to the new edition and not my change of approach, the two are pretty much the same thing. Fourth edition has finally taught me that rules exist to give the players the freedom to live as heroes, not to hold them back with knee-jerk "realism."

—No-More-Knee-Jerk-Realism Rob

Rob's testimony here is one that I've been hearing over and over again since the release of 4th Edition. And I'm glad to hear it. If you take anything away from Save My Game, it should be this: When you run a D&D game, your chief job is to help create heroic fantasy fun for your players and yourself. Yes, you are creating interesting and deadly challenges. Yes, you are world building. Yes, you are adjudicating rules. But all of those activities serve that main end. Good job, Rob! That look of delight is the greatest gift players can give you (though chipping in for your share of the pizza comes in a close second).

Resolution?

I have a rules question. When I have a number of effects that occur at the start of the turn, which order do they resolve. For instance, if I have a monster that has regeneration 5, and is taking ongoing fire 5, which goes first?

–Looking-for-the-Right-Way Chris

I'm going to be a little cheeky here. Which one do you want to go first?

I'm only half kidding. The rules are quiet on an order of operations mainly because it's not a good idea to force one where it doesn't belong. The best way to deal with issues like these is to allow the person controlling the creature to decide the order of the effects (much like they do for saving throws at the end of their turn). This grants the player the ability to make choices for his or her own character, and allows you, as the DM, to make choices that serve the narrative and fun, rather than follow techie and unnecessary rules.

Magic Item Misfits

My group has been playing 4th Edition and having a blast with it, but my players have brought up a concern regarding magic items, and I was wondering how we could deal with it. Right now we are in low-epic levels and my players are distressed that they cannot hit anything without their magic items. Any level-appropriate challenge becomes extremely difficult if they are not using their best stuff. This is a problem for my players, who like to carry different assortments of weaponry (and sometimes armors) for different situations, especially for the fighter who likes to use different weapons for different effects with his powers. My players argue that at such high levels they should be able to stay relevant with ordinary equipment, and that magic items should be a nice bonus. One player expressed that magic items don't feel special because they are a requirement for the character just to be viable.

Do you guys have any optional rules or anything of that sort that could resolve this before I have a full-scale mutiny on my hands? I have considered using the magic item threshold rules for NPCs from the Dungeon Master's Guide *(page 187) to give the players a flat bonus as they level up that wouldn't stack with the enhancement bonus of magic items. Would this be a reasonable optional rule in your opinion?*

–Spill-All-You-Know Crow

Well, we wouldn't want a mutiny, would we? While we do tend to have some optional rules lying here and there on desks (we are all game designers, developers, and editors, after all), your basic solution of using the magic item thresholds for NPCs should work reasonably well. If you want a system that is low magic or where the majority of the magic of an item resides in its powers and properties, you can also just assume that all items have the baseline bonus for magic for that level. This would make those super-generalist characters more powerful than the baseline D&D characters, but it sounds like that's what your players want out of their epic play.

Be careful, though. If this issue is enough to really cause a mutiny, I have a sneaking suspicion that you have a power gamer (or many power gamers) on your hands. You'll want to watch and make sure that they don't push to add magic bonuses on top of the assumed enhancements, or try to get you to lax the restrictions on magic item daily powers. Make sure your game is fun, but that it's fun for everyone–not just the person with the loudest or most persistent arguments.

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when **Stephen Radney-MacFarland** came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.

Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D where he doesn't create the traps... he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Clog Our Mailbox!

Your game needs saving, or you have some game saving advice of your own? Drop us a line at dndinsider@wizards.com with the worlds Save My Game as your subject line. Maybe next month we'll talk about your problem or feature some bit of advice that comes from the mailbag.

You can also join the game saving conversation on our message boards, but piping in on the discussion of DM tips and tricks. Stephen makes it a point to visit and chat with those who agree and disagree with him.